Ottoman Puritanism and its Discontents:
Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī and the Qāḍīzādelis

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TRANSLITERATION GUIDE

Arabic	Symbol	Arabic	Symbol
ا	A	ط	Ṭ
ب	B	ظ	Ẓ
ت	T	ع	ᶜ
ث	Th	غ	Gh
ج	J	ف	F
ح	Ḥ	ق	Q
خ	Kh	ك	K
د	D	ل	L
ذ	Dh	م	M
ر	R	ن	N
ز	Z	ه	H
س	S	و	W
ش	Sh	ي	Y
ص	Ṣ	ء	’
ض	Ḍ	ة	A/T

Short Vowels:

ُ	u
َ	a
ِ	i

Long Vowels:

و	ū
ا	ā

ي	ī

Dipthongs:

او	aw
اي	ay

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ABSTRACT

This book is about the emergence of a new activist Sufism in the Muslim world from the sixteenth century onwards, which emphasised personal responsibility for putting God's guidance into practice. It focuses specifically on developments at the centre of the Ottoman Empire, but also considers both how they might have been influenced by the wider connections and engagements of learned and holy men and how their influence might have been spread from the Ottoman Empire to South Asia in particular. The immediate focus is on the Qāḍīzādeli movement which flourished in Istanbul from the 1620s to the 1680s and which inveighed against corrupt scholars and heterodox Sufis. Up to now this movement has been seen as proto-Wahhābī, proto-fundamentalist or otherwise retrograde. The book aims by studying the relationship between Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī's magisterial *Majālis al-abrār* and Qāḍīzādeli beliefs to place both author and the movement in an Ottoman, Ḥanafī, and Sufi milieu. Moreover, the study suggests that the impact of the *Majālis al-abrār* on the Qāḍīzādelis had the outcome in the second half of the seventeenth century of increasing the violence of their activists, a development which ultimately led to their downfall.

This study makes a number of important contributions to religio-intellectual studies and to early modern Middle Eastern history: it brings to life the largely-overlooked scholar al-Āqḥiṣārī; it analyses his masterpiece, *Majālis al-abrār* and demonstrates its influence on Islamic revivalism in the Ottoman Empire; it broadens our understanding of the Qāḍīzādeli movement; and it suggests how the *Majālis* and, more broadly, Qāḍīzādeli puritanism, might be placed in the context of the movement of ideas between West and South Asia, and further afield, from the seventeenth century onwards.

ABBREVIATIONS

EI^2	*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd Edition
İA	*İslam Ansiklopedisi*
The Balance of Truth	*Mīzān al-ḥaqq fī ikhtiyār al-aḥaqq -The Balance of Truth*
Majālis	*Majālis al-abrār*
Q	*Qur'an*

INTRODUCTION

Eleven centuries after the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, corresponding to the seventeenth century, the religious landscape of Ottoman Turkey was dramatically shaken by a movement of puritanical reformers and activists known as the Qāḍīzādelis. Drawn from a spectrum of religious and social classes, and bound together by a unified vision for Ottoman society, these puritans were able to maneuver themselves into hugely significant positions of influence such that, by the reign of Sultan Murād IV (r. 1032/1623-1049/1640), they had a virtual monopoly over the pulpits of Istanbul's imperial mosques. Engaging in a campaign to claim back Islam from corrupt scholars and heterodox Sufis,[1] the Qāḍīzādelis promulgated a return to the way of the *Salaf* (the early generations of Muslims), a new vision for the spiritual path and a form of violent activism which had not been seen in Ottoman lands before their time. Disseminating their teachings through the mosque sermon and scholarly writing, they were able to give renewed life to the centuries-old dialectic between orthodoxy and heresy. And drawing as much from local Ottoman Ḥanafism as they did from more exotic Sunni interpretations, these preachers and activists would make an indelible mark on Ottoman piety and serve as paragons for later generations of puritans and revivalists in both Ottoman Turkey and the wider Muslim world.

[1] On the corruption of the Ottoman learned institution, see M. Zilfi, *Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Post-Classical Age (1600-1800)* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica [Studies in Middle-Eastern History, 8] 1988). On Sufi antinomianism in the Ottoman Empire, see A. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Middle Period 1200-1550* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).

Qāḍīzādeli polemic consisted of invective directed at a host of religious doctrines and practices that had currency in Ottoman lands. Among these were practices such as praying at the graves of saints, audible meditation, mystical singing and extra-scriptural prayers performed in congregation. The movement was not content with rooting out heresies which impinged upon their interpretation of pristine Islam; it also targeted various social norms and behaviours which it believed compromised upright Muslim behaviour. In this regard, its members were actively opposed to the consumption of coffee, the use of tobacco and opium, and the presence of *kahvehane*s where these habits, deemed by them as licentious, typically happened.[2] What marked the Qāḍīzādelis apart within Ottoman society more broadly and from those in the learned hierarchy who shared their concerns about the moral well-being of society was that they placed responsibility for reform of the self, neighbours and the broader community on the shoulders of the individual. Unsurprisingly, many Ottomans viewed the Qāḍīzādelis as little more than an uncouth mob which had an irrational and insatiable appetite for censure and violence. Indeed their attacking of religious and social practices that were deeply ingrained within Ottoman consciousness and to a great extent cherished would have made little sense to those around them. In every important sense, the Qāḍīzādelis were disconnected from wider society, with little regard for much else besides their own utopian vision.

[2] Coffee-houses played a major role in the exchange of ideas and indeed rumours concerning the politics of the day. The seeds of sedition were frequently sown here and during the 17th and 18th centuries, coffeehouses were the bane of more than a few sultans and viziers. On this see M. Zilfi, 'The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul,' *Journal of Near Eastern Studies,* 45 (1986), pp. 256-257; also F. Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul: 1700/1800* (California: University of California Press, 2010).

Interest in the Qāḍīzādelis is growing fast, not only within the academic community but also, as indicated by online forums, the Muslim public. This should come as no surprise because through understanding the Qādīzādelis there is the prospect of acquiring a better understanding of later manifestations of religious revivalism in the Muslim world, as well as the more obvious prospect of uncovering new data about a particularly inglorious moment in Ottoman history. These and other reasons have no doubt drawn scholars to the study of the Ottoman seventeenth century. Notwithstanding the burgeoning interest, it is clear that studies to date on the Qāḍīzādelis have reached an impasse insofar as they seem unable to move beyond a construction of the movement which characterises it as proto-fundamentalist.[3] While this reading is by no means unwarranted given what we know historically about the Qāḍizādelis, it is also clear that the movement was more complex than this, coming as it did from within a local Ottoman-Ḥanafī milieu. A further problem with the existing literature is that, too often, scholars have accepted without scrutiny the observations of the Qāḍīzādelis as recorded in contemporaneous or near-contemporary Ottoman accounts. This has led to a failure to properly understand the movement's reformist agenda. Moreover, anachronistic readings of the Qāḍīzādelis in which they are

[3] See for example Joseph Von Hammer, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches* (Vienna: C.A. Hartleben's Verlage, 1829-1830; reprint, Granz: Akademischen Druck, 1963), 5: 163-164, 528-531; 6: 5-8, 182-185 (page references are to reprint edition); F.W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans* (New York: Octagon Books, 1973), 2: 420-423; A. Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie,* vol. I, *Les Juifs d'Izmir* (Istanbul, 1937), pp. 250-252; Abdülbaki Gölpinarli, *Mevlānā'dan Sonra Mevlevīlik,* 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Inkilap ve Aka, 1983), pp. 158-168; Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey,* vol. 1, *Empire of the Gazis: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire, 1280-1808* (Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 206-207; A.Y. Ocak, 'XVII. Yūzyilda Osmanli Imparatorlugun'da Dinde Tasfiye (Püritanizm) Teşebbüşlerine Bir Bakiş: "Kadizādeliler Hareketi",' *Türk Kültürü Araştirmalari,* 1-2 (1983): pp. 208-226; H. Inalçik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600,* translated by N. Itzkowitz and C. Imber (New York: Praeger, 1973), especially chapter 18; M. Zilfi, *Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Post-Classical Age (1600-1800)* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica [Studies in Middle-Eastern History, 8] 1988); M. Zilfi, 'The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in 17th Century Istanbul,' *Journal of Near-Eastern Studies*, 45 (1986), 251-269; Ş. Çavuşoğlu, 'Kadizadeliler', *İA.*

cast as anti-Sufis,[4] proto-Wahhābīs[5] or even a phenomenon *sui generis*, of neither the ᶜIlmiyye[6] nor from within the masses (*rāᶜiyya*), are not uncommon.[7]

In terms of their scope, studies have shed important light on the contribution and role of Birgili Meḥmed Efendi (d. 981/1573), widely considered the spiritual inspiration of the movement; Qāḍīzāde Meḥmed (d. 1044/1635), the movement's eponym and under whom the reformist agenda was catapulted into the political centre of Ottoman society; and Üsṭüwānī (d. 1072/1661) and Wānī Efendi (d. 1096/1685), leaders in the latter half of the seventeenth century.[8] Their associations with the movement are now established and some progress towards understanding the significance of Qāḍīzādeli writings has also been made. The best known Qāḍīzādeli text is without doubt Birgili's *al-Ṭarīqat al-Muḥamadiyya,* which by the 18th century was one of the most widely owned books in the Ottoman domains, and which even today has a place on the curricula of madrasas across

[4] I am not aware of any study to date that has avoided this error.

[5] See especially Ş. Çavuşoğlu, 'The Kadizadeli Movement: An Attempt of Şeri'at-Minded Reform in the Ottoman Empire' (unpublished PhD thesis, Princeton University, 1990); and C. Kafadar, 'The Myth of the Golden Age: Ottoman Historical Consciousness in the Post-Süleymanic Era,' in *Süleyman the Second and His Times,* edited by H. Inalçik and C. Kafadar (Isis Press, 1993).

[6] The ᶜIlmiyye is the Ottoman learned institution. See S.A. Somel, *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2003), p. 129.

[7] See for example N. Öztürk's, 'Islamic Orthodoxy among the Ottomans in the Seventeenth Century with Special Reference to the Qadi-zade Movement' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1981).

[8] Notable examples are N. Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy'; Ş. Çavuşoğlu, 'The Kadizadeli Movement'; and M.D. Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

the Muslim world.[9] But there are other figures whose stories in relation to the Qāḍīzādelis have yet to be told: Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī (d. 1041/1632), the subject of this study, is certainly one such figure. A Ḥanafī-Māturīdī in terms of school affiliation, a Sufi and, most importantly, contemporary of Qāḍīzāde Meḥmed, the precise role that he had in relation to Qāḍīzādeli puritanism is yet to be determined. This is surprising given that al-Āqḥiṣārī wrote over twenty treatises, many of which share Qāḍīzādeli concerns. The first serious survey of al-Āqḥiṣārī's thought has only recently been published—the critical edition and translation of *Risāleh dukhāniyyeh,* or *Epistle on tobacco*,[10] a text which sets out the reasons for the Anatolian's opposition to tobacco. Yet al-Āqḥiṣārī's scholarly *oeuvre* consists of much more than just jurisprudence. He wrote on, *inter alia*, theology, ḥadīth, Sufism and the science of Qur'an recitation. There is therefore still much work to be done before a fuller appreciation is gained of al-Āqḥiṣārī's contribution to Ottoman puritanism in the seventeenth century.

There can be no doubt that al-Āqḥiṣārī's seminal contribution to Ottoman revivalism was his *Majālis al-abrār wa masālik al-akhyār wa maḥāyiq al-bida*[c] *wa maqāmi*[c] *al-ashrār - The Assemblies of the Pious and the Paths of the Excellent, The Obliteration of Innovations and the Curbing of the Wicked* (hereafter *Majālis al-abrār/Majālis*). A

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[9] T. Krstić's survey of library catalogues of Ottoman manuscript collections reveals that in the most prominent Rumeli collections in Sarajevo and Sofia, the list of most copied works (after the Qur'an) is led by Birgili's *al-Ṭarīqat al-Muḥammadiyya* and *Vasiyyetnāme* (*Risāle-yi Birgivī*). Üṣtüwānī's *Kitāb* was also among the most widely circulated books. See *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 29.

[10] Y. Michot, *Against Smoking: An Ottoman Manifesto.* An introduction, edition and translation of Aḥmad Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī's *al-Risāla al-dukhāniyya* (Leicester: Kube Publishing, 2010).

commentary on one hundred *ḥadīth*s collected in the *Maṣābīḥ al-Sunna - The Lamps of the Tradition* of Abū Muḥammad Ḥuṣayn b. Mas^{c}ūd al-Baghawī (d. 515/1122),[11] *Majālis al-abrār* is a veritable manifesto for reform that aims to reset Muslim dogma and ritual practice such that both are consistent with his own conception of orthodoxy.[12] Even a cursory perusal of its contents makes it clear why it deserves inclusion alongside the better-known texts of Qāḍīzādeli Islam.[13] Significantly, despite the tome that it is, *Majālis al-abrār,* like its author, has been almost entirely overlooked by scholars of Ottoman religious and intellectual history. Therefore the central purpose of this study is to subject the text and to the extent possible the author to scholarly inquiry, carefully reconstructing al-Āqḥiṣārī's ideas via a textual excavation of *Majālis al-abrār.* Al-Āqḥiṣārī's location within the Ottoman religious and intellectual milieu of the seventeenth century provides a massive opportunity for uncovering important facts about the programmatic dimension of the reform agenda of the Qāḍīzādeli movement. The cumulative effect of these endeavours will provide the clearest picture yet of the aims and ambitions of the Qāḍīzādelis generally and al-Āqḥiṣārī specifically.

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[11] Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Mas^{c}ūd b. Muḥammad al-Baghawī, Shāfi^{c}ī jurist and prolific author in *ḥadīth.* He is most famous for his *Sharḥ al-sunna* and *Maṣābīḥ al-sunna.* See E. Dickinson, 'Baghawī', *EI*^{2}.

[12] In the main, al-Āqḥiṣārī's notion of orthodoxy was aligned with that of the Ottoman ^{c}Ulamā', which in the 17th century was still based on the Ḥanafī rite and Māturīdī doctrine. For more on the Ottoman learned establishment, see M. Zilfi, 'The Ottoman *Ulema,*' in *The Cambridge History of Turkey: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839,* edited by S. Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). The whole question of constructing orthodoxy in Islam is an interesting one. Certainly worth a read is A. El Shamsi's chapter, 'The Social Construction of Orthodoxy,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology,* edited by T. Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[13] See the contents of the *Majālis* in Chapter 2.

The findings may be disquieting for those familiar with the existing literature on the Qāḍīzādelis. *Majālis al-abrār* betrays al-Āqḥiṣārī's conceptualisation of the spiritual path, one which is contiguous in many of its aspects with Naqshbandī mysticism; the study demonstrates conclusively that al-Āqḥiṣārī benefitted from the works of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) and his teacher, Aḥmad b. Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), a link which puts to rest the claim that Ibn Taymiyya's influence on modern Islamic revivalism, especially outside Wahhābī circles, does not begin until the 19th century;[14] al-Āqḥiṣārī's advocacy of "enjoining good and forbidding evil" (*al-amr bi-l-ma^c^rūf wa l-nahy ^c^an al-munkar*) takes on a violent hue, unknown in better-known Qāḍīzādeli texts. The study will argue that this implies al-Āqḥiṣārī may have been responsible for the escalation of violence among Qāḍīzādeli activists in the latter half of the seventeenth century, a programmatic shift which ultimately led to their downfall. To all intents and purposes, it seems that this forgotten puritan played a central role in the evolution of Qāḍīzādeli Islam, standing alongside better-known ideologues like Birgili and Meḥmet Qāḍīzāde.

The study comprises of five chapters. The first chapter is an historical survey of the Qāḍīzādeli movement, which focusses on its first phase, followed by a critical assessment of the existing literature within the field. The second chapter introduces Aḥmad al-Rūmī

[14] According to K. El-Rouayheb, the influence of Ibn Taymiyya among non-Ḥanbalī Sunni scholars in the centuries subsequent to his death and up until the 19th century has been exaggerated. Regarding Taymiyyan influence in Ottoman Turkey, he says, 'The views of Birgiwī and his Kadizadeli followers may have been rooted, not in the thought of Ibn Taymiyya, but in an intolerant current within the Ḥanafi-Maturidi school'. See his chapter, "From Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 1566) to Khayr al-Dīn al-Ālūsī (d. 1899): Changing views of Ibn Taymiyya among non-Ḥanbalī Sunni scholars" in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,* ed. Y. Rapoport and S. Ahmed (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 304.

al-Āqḥiṣārī and his tome, *Majālis al-abrār*. Via the textual excavation of the *Majālis*, al-Āqḥiṣārī's thought is situated within the intellectual and religious milieu of Ottoman Turkey, while the chapter also serves as the corner-stone for a reassessment of Qāḍīzādeli activism more generally. Since a straightforward biographical account of al-Āqḥiṣārī's life and work is hindered by a lack of sources—the only mention that he is given in the addendum (*dhayl*) to Kātib Çelebi's *Kashf al-ẓunūn* is a brief statement, and in any case misidentifies him as a shaykh of the Khalwatī order—the only way to reconstruct his thought is via his writing. This chapter also introduces the themes and specific content of *Majālis al-abrār,* as well as the authorities cited by al-Āqḥiṣārī. The third chapter begins the textual excavation of *Majālis al-abrār,* commencing with an inquiry into al-Āqḥiṣārī's conception of the spiritual path. There is an examination of al-Āqḥiṣārī's advocacy of and commitment to Sufism, and the convergence of his outlook with the Naqshbandī path. It becomes clear that, despite obvious convergences, al-Āqḥiṣārī was unlikely to have been directly affiliated with the Naqshbandī order—more probably, his appropriation of central doctrines and key devotional practices associated with the order was but an element within a broader commitment towards reforming Ottoman Sufism, and therefore an aspect of the reformism associated with Birgili. The fourth chapter focuses on the principal concern of the *Majālis,* namely the discussion of innovations (*bid*ᶜ*a*) in ritual worship. Al-Āqḥiṣārī cites some of the most famous texts penned on the subject but, as the chapter demonstrates, no text within this scholastic genre is as influential on his thinking as *Iqtidā' al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* of Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya. Since no explicit mention of the *Iqtidā'* is made in the *Majālis*, a detailed textual comparison is

undertaken in order to demonstrate the places in the text where al-Āqḥiṣārī either cites verbatim or paraphrases parts of the *Iqtidā'*. A further aim of the chapter is to bring to light those aspects of al-Āqḥiṣārī's reform programme that justify him being linked to the Qāḍīzādelis. The final chapter constitutes a survey of the activist strand within al-Āqḥiṣārī's writing, particularly the demand he placed on the Muslim faithful to actively engage in enjoining good and forbidding evil. There is also an assessment of the broader implications of the research findings, including a discussion on al-Āqḥiṣārī's influence beyond the Ottoman lands. The design of this study is guided by its commitment to analysis over historical narrative. It therefore commences with a broad assessment of al-Āqḥiṣārī's ideological outlook, looking particularly at his views on Sufism and his conceptualisation of religious innovation, before proceeding with a detailed examination of his revivalist programme. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of al-Āqḥiṣārī's contribution to Ottoman revivalism and avoids the generalisations and misinterpretations that have beleaguered previous studies on the Qāḍīzādelis.

Although virtually ignored by Turkish and Western scholarship, the *Majālis* was twice edited in India. The first edition was published in Delhi in 1866; the text includes an interlinear translation into Urdu by Subḥān Bakhsh al-Shikārpūrī and bears the title, *Khazīnat al-asrār—The Treasury of Secrets*. The second edition was published in Lucknow in 1903, the work of ᶜAbd al-Walī al-Madrāsī, and also comprises an interlinear Urdu translation. It bears the title, *Maṭāriḥ al-anẓār, tarjamat Majālis al-abrār—The Objects of Examinations, Translation of the Sessions of the Pious.* While some

consideration is given to what might have been the possible appeal of the *Majālis* to the nineteenth century Indian revivalists and reformers, establishing how the text reached the Indian Subcontinent falls outside the scope of this study.

In the tradition of Michot, al-Āqḥiṣārī will largely be allowed to speak for himself. Translations from *Majālis al-abrār,* as well as other relevant material from al-Āqḥiṣārī's *oeuvre* feature in generous doses within the body of the present study. All references are to the *Michot 0402* manuscript of the *Majālis* since the two editions of the text are based on incomplete hand-written copies.[15] The manuscript that serves the basis of this study behoves some description: bound in leather and decorated with a floral motif, it is of thin paper, each folio having a lined-border of red ink. There are annotations and corrections in the margins that are written in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish. The text was copied in a cursive Naskh script though the style is largely regular. At certain places there are additional bits of paper attached to the manuscript which bear notes. There are no stamps suggesting who the original owner might have been or signs that it was an endowment. Whilst the date of the copy and copier are not available anywhere in the manuscript, a watermark clearly visible on one of its folios suggests that it was copied sometime around the end of the seventeenth century or beginning of the eighteenth century.[16]

[15] Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī, *Majālis al-abrār,* MS. *Michot 0402.* The manuscript was kindly provided to me by my supervisor, Y. Michot, who is also the owner of one of the rare complete extant copies. For more on the manuscript see Chapter 2. The incomplete Urdu editions are of ᶜAbd al-Walī Madrāsī, *Maṭāriḥ al-anẓār, tarjamat Majālis al-abrār* (Lucknow: Maṭbaᶜat al-Āsī l-Madrāsī, 1321/1903) and Subḥān Baksh al-Shikārpūrī, *Khizīnat al-asrār, tarjamat Majālis al-abrār* (Delhi: Maṭbaᶜ Muṣṭafā'ī, 1283/1866).

[16] Y. Michot, *L'opium et le cafe* (Paris-Beirut: Albouraq, 2008), pp. 56-58.



The first folio of the MS *Michot 0402*

CHAPTER ONE: OTTOMAN PURITANISM

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the Qāḍīzādelis, an account that begins with a biographical sketch of its eponymous founder, Meḥmed Qāḍīzāde. This is followed by a survey of the most important dedicated scholarly contributions to the field, particular those that have informed our understanding of the movement in its political and social context. Since much ink has been spilt explaining the emergence of the Qāḍīzādelis against the backdrop of Ottoman decline, the final section of this chapter addresses the debate about how accurate it is to view the seventeenth century as the turning point in Ottoman history. The debate has potential implications for how we understand the emergence of the Qāḍīzādelis.

Introducing the Qāḍīzādelis

The Qāḍīzādelis, also known as the *fakiler* (legists),[17] were named after Meḥmed Qāḍīzāde, a scholar and activist born to an Anatolian judge in Balıkesir, close to the Marmara coast, in 989/1582.[18] Qāḍīzāde received his early religious instruction from

[17] *Faki* (Arabic. *faqīh*) was the generic title given by the Ottomans to one who had any professional connection with Islamic law. In fact, within legal circles, it was more specifically the appellage of someone who had knowledge of the law but not necessarily capable of deriving or executing law. These two latter roles were in the remit of the *mujtahid* and *qāḍī.* For more on these specialised roles, see W. Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). See also D.B. McDonald, 'fakīh', *EI*[2]. On the political role of the *fuqahā'* in Muslim societies generally, see N. Feldman, *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State* (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); W. Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and A.K.S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam: An Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Theory: The Jurists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

[18] On the Qāḍīzādelis generally and Meḥmet Qāḍīzāde specifically, see Ş. Çavuşoğlu, 'Kadızādeliler', *İA*, 24: 100-102; idem., 'The Kadizadeli movement', pp. 68-74.

several students of one of the century's most respected scholars, Birgili Meḥmed b. Pīr ᶜAlī (d. 980/1573), another son of Balıkesir, and a scholar and activist in his own right.[19] This early association with Birgili, albeit through his students, would prove life-changing for Qāḍīzāde, and bear upon his own religious *weltanschauung* for the remainder of his life.

Heralding from a family of teachers and scholars, it was perhaps inevitable that Qāḍīzāde would himself follow the path of religious training. Intent on a career within the Ottoman learned institutions, Qāḍīzāde set off for Istanbul hoping to be accepted at one of the imperial city's reputable seminaries. In Istanbul, armed with the privileged training he had received in his home village, Qāḍīzāde easily gained acceptance at the madrasa of his choice, and so began a new phase in his academic life which would eventually lead to a career in sermonising and admonition (*al-waᶜẓ wa l-naṣīḥa*).[20]

Biographical data indicates that, not long after he had settled into his new life, Qāḍīzāde forsook the path of learning for initiation into the Khalwatī order, which at that time was one of the largest Sufi networks within the Ottoman Empire.[21] It is unclear why he made the abrupt move though it may have been for no other reason than a quest for variety.

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[19] On Birgili, see Kasim Kufrevi, 'Birgewi (Birgiwi, Birgeli) Mehmed b. Pir 'Ali', *EI*[2]; A.T. Arslan, *Imam Birgivi: Hayati Eserli ve Arapça Tedrisatindaki Yeri* (Istanbul: 1992); and Atsız, *İstanbul kütüphanelerine göre Birgili Mehmet Efendi (929-981 = 1523-1573) bibliografyası* (Istanbul: 1966).

[20] M. Zilfi, *Politics of Piety,* p. 131; Ş. Çavuşoğlu 'Kadızādeliler', *İA*, p. 100.

[21] On the Khalwatī order, see B.G. Martin, 'A Short History of the Khalwati Order of Dervishes,' in *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500,* edited by N.R. Keddie (Berkley: University of California Press, 1972).

Whatever his motivation, Qāḍīzāde soon became disillusioned, particularly with what he perceived as the libertine ways of the order he had joined. After what was probably no more than a few weeks or months Qāḍīzāde returned to the path of preaching.[22] He never completely turned his back on the mystical path however, and continued to show deep reverence for Birgili Efendi, who was both a Sufi and passionate advocate of the mystical tradition. What is beyond doubt, however, is that he remained antagonistic towards the Khalwatī order for the rest of his days, inveighing against them in his writings, engaging in debate with their leaders and even encouraging a campaign of violence against their lodges and members up until his death in 1635. Although remembered as a hard-liner who instigated a violent campaign against popular religion and culture, for his stinging and vituperative critique of his opponents,[23] Qāḍīzāde could easily have been remembered for more admirable reasons: he was a master of the spoken word which is attested to by the swift progression he made up the *wāᶜiẓ* hierarchy; he landed one position after another at the great imperial mosques—Sultan Selim I, Beyazid, the Süleymāniye, until eventually he reached the pinnacle of the preacher career-ladder by becoming imam of the Aya Sofya in late 1631.[24] He was, moreover, a respectable scholar

[22] *The Balance of Truth by Kātib Çelebi*, translated with an introduction and notes by G.L. Lewis (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957), pp. 132-133; M. Zilfi, *Politics of Piety*, p. 131; Ş. Çavuşoğlu, 'Kadızādeliler', *İA*, p. 100.

[23] The most important Turkish chronicles that speak about the Qāḍīzādelis are Nev'īzāde ᶜAṭā'ī's *Ḥadā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq fī takmilat al-Shaqā'iq* (Istanbul, 1268/1851-52); Ibrāhīm Ḥasib ᶜUşşākāzāde's *Dhayl al-Shaqā'iq,* Süleymāniye Library, MS. *Çelebi Abdullah 260;* Meḥmed Şeyḥī, *Waqāyiᶜ al-fuḍalā',* Süleymaniye Library, MS *Hamidiye 939.* There is also a body of European contemporary and near-contemporary European accounts of the Qāḍīzādelis: J. Thévenot, *L'Empire du Grand Turc Vu par Un Sujet de Louis XIV: Jean Thévenot* (Paris; Calmann-Levy, 1965), pp. 173-175; Paul Rycaut, *The History of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire,* 5th edition (London, 1682), pp. 242-243; Louis Laurent d'Arvieux, *Mémoires du Chevalier d'Arvieux,* 6 vols. (Paris: C.J.B Déléspine, 1735), 4: 390-391; John Covel, "Extracts from the Diaries of Dr. John Covel, 1670-1679)," in *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant*, edited by J. Theodore Bent, Hakluyt Society no. 87 (London, 1893), pp. 268-269.

[24] M. Zilfi, *Politics of Piety*, p. 131.

who authored several treatises on both dogmatic and jurisprudential subjects. In later life, he would be able to boast among his students the prolific polymath Kātib Çelebi.[25]

One of the best-documented events in the career of Qāḍīzāde was his clash with the head of the Khalwatī order, Shaykh Siwāsī Efendi (d. 1048/1639) in 1633 at the Sultan Ahmad mosque. The debate fell on the Birthday of the Prophet (*mawlid)*, a day held by most Turks to be the most auspicious in the calendar. For Qāḍīzāde this was an opportunity to voice in public a list of contentions—a thundering voice of dissent that would deeply disturb the unsuspecting audience. The organisation of the debate required that the two preachers take turns to step up to the pulpit and make their cases to the congregation. The event is reported by several near-contemporary writers, the most thorough of whom is Kātib Çelebi, who, in his *Mīzān al-ḥaqq—The Balance of Truth,* enumerates the arguments put forward by the two Shaykhs, about whom he writes: '[They] were diametrically opposed to one another; because of their differing temperaments, warfare arose between them. In most of the controversies I have mentioned in this book, Qādīzāde took one side and Sīvāsī took the other, both going to extremes, and the followers of both used to quarrel and dispute, one against the other.[26] He continues by cataloguing each of the points of disagreement that engaged the two disputants, recording rich details, anecdotes and personal analysis of the contentious issues. In his estimation there were twenty points of dispute in total, each of which had been raised at some point

[25] See Kātib Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth,* pp. 135-136.

[26] Kātib Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth,* pp. 132-133.

in the Islamic past already as either a dogmatic or jurisprudential concern. The issues were: the use of stimulants such as coffee, tobacco and opium; singing, chanting or musical accompaniment in *dhikr*; dancing in Sufi ceremonies; pilgrimages to the tombs of alleged saints or the otherwise blessed; the invocation of blessings upon the Prophet and his Companions upon every mention of their names; the collective performance of supererogatory prayers which were not original to the early community; the practice of cursing the Umayyad Caliph Yazīd (d. 63/683); and shaking the hands after prayer and bowing down to superiors. In matters of belief, the contentious issues were: the heresy of believing in Ibn ᶜArabī's 'oneness of being' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*); belief in the immortality of Khiḍr; the belief that the Prophet's parents died as believers; and the reference to Islam as 'the religion of Abraham'.

Qāḍīzāde advocated the jurists' position on these points of contention—these were either unsanctioned practices or heretical beliefs that had no place in Islam. Siwāsī, head of the Khalwatīs, was naturally disposed towards a position of accommodation and sought to demonstrate that each and every one was justified, even commendable. The debate left few among the audience indifferent. Two opposing camps were created, to be described thereafter as "Qāḍīzāde's lot" (*Qāḍīzādeler*) and "Siwāsī's lot" (*Siwāsīler*). Perhaps most significantly, the debate spilled into the streets of Istanbul. Kātib Çelebi explains that from this point onwards the warring sides remained locked in battle for many years, and as is quite typical in circumstances like this, the particular religious questions became overshadowed by the politics that had been created. Cynically, or perhaps realistically,

Kātib Çelebi argued that the debate was continued only because of the political advantage both parties sought to gain. And only when it looked as though the verbal contentions appeared to be drawing the two sides into armed conflict did it become necessary for the Sultan to intervene.[27]

There were certain customary practices which Qāḍīzāde saved his especial indignation for, and the use of tobacco was certainly at the fore.[28] A number of Ottoman ᶜulamā' had already turned their attention towards the issue of smoking, declaring fatwas of outright condemnation.[29] Qāḍīzāde's own position was very much in line with these, and while none of his writings on tobacco have been preserved, we are told by chroniclers such as Şolakzāde, Silāḥdār and Naᶜīmā that he formulated both "religious and rational arguments" in support of the banning of the substance.[30] Two previous sultans, Murād III (r. 982/1574-1003/1595) and Aḥmad I (r. 1012/1603-1026/1617), had criminalised smoking already, and attempted in their respective reigns to close down coffeehouses.[31]

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[27] Kātib Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth,* pp. 133-134.

[28] It is likely that this sentiment would have been commonly held even outside scholarly circles. Smoking in the 17th century it seems was associated with some rather unsavoury habits, as F. Klein-Franke points out: 'One has to imagine that tobacco smoking [...] was accompanied by the constant noise of sneezing, suckling and spitting.' Cited in Michot, *Against Smoking,* note 3, p. 23.

[29] See Ş. Çavuşoğlu, 'The Kādizādeli Movement', pp. 209-210. One such fatwa was issued by Shaykh al-Islām Yaḥya Efendi (d. 1043/1644): 'Question: When tobacco smokers arrive at the mosque, Muslims are annoyed because of the bad smell of their mouth and their garments. Tobacco is harmful in various ways to people who are addicted to it. Besides, engaging in this despised act leads to idleness. The sultan has therefore issued a decree for its prohibition. How should one act towards the ones who violate this prohibition? Answer: The imperial decree which forbids people from smoking is in accordance with Sharīᶜa. All Muslims should abide by it since this would be an auspicious act. Those who accept this prohibition deserve to enjoy worldly benefactions. Those who continue to smoke deserve a great punishment. They should be prohibited firmly and by way of compulsion.' Ibid, pp. 219-220.

[30] Şolakzāde, *Tārī*753 *,ḥ*; Naᶜīmā, *Tārī*221 :6 *,ḥ*. Cited in Ş. Çavuşoğlu, 'The Kādizādelī Movement', pp. 217-218.

[31] Ş. Çavuşoğlu, 'The Kādizādelī Movement', p. 216.

Their attempts, however, proved unsuccessful and it was not until the reign of Murād IV, with the support of Qāḍīzāde, that, according to the same chroniclers, the Sultan took a particularly heavy-handed approach by issuing an edict demanding the razing of all the coffeehouses in Istanbul where tobacco was used.[32] Baer describes what the atmosphere of the time was like, and how, after a major fire in Istanbul in 1633, smokers and coffee-drinkers were accused by the authorities of being the cause of God's wrath:

> Some blamed such widespread immorality and vice for a great conflagration that burned perhaps one-fifth of the city; the prohibition of coffee and tobacco and the razing of the places where they were consumed was issued soon after the fire since coffee, tobacco and wine appeared to incite men to commit abominable acts and sexual violence and engage in debauchery. Countless humble coffee drinkers and tobacco smokers were executed in Istanbul and wherever Murād IV travelled. Such an atmosphere of terror was created that everyone's intentions were considered suspect; innocent people, even young sons of imams who stayed too late at mosque, were executed for not going about at night with a lantern. While en route to the Baghdad campaign, Murād IV had fourteen people executed for using tobacco, including the head of the gatekeepers and Janisseries.[33]

The relationship between Qāḍīzāde and Sultan Murād was mutually beneficial. The former witnessed his own puritanical agenda unfolding in front of him; the latter was able to see to it that the coffee-houses—in his estimation the hotbeds of revolt—were dealt with in a single sweep. In this context, Naᶜīmā says,

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[32] Ş. Çavuşoğlu, 'The Kādizādelī Movement', p. 216.

[33] M.D. Baer, *Honoured by the Glory of Islam,* p. 67.

> His Majesty Sultan Murād Khān had demolished the coffee-houses in order to control and instruct the people, and issued a strict prohibition, for the purpose of preventing the consumption of tobacco and removing its existence entirely. He threatened those who were careless with violent punishment and death. At about that time Kādizāde Efendi, in order to obtain recognition from the exalted sovereign, expounded the matter of the illegality of tobacco, according to his own false opinion, using independent reasoning and rational and traditional proofs. He raised his voice to the vault of heaven, uttering immeasurable fallacies.[34]

Qāḍīzāde was by no means the first scholar to criticise those whom he believed to be violating precepts of the Sharīᶜa, or indeed the first to oppose social norms such as smoking and coffee-drinking. Keen that his detractors recognised that he was merely toeing the orthodox line on these matters, he declared in his *Risāleh* that the same innovations (*bidᶜa*) that he was opposed to were also flagged as pernicious by the majority of the jurists of his age: 'I have seen [these innovations mentioned] in more than a hundred reliable books and I have discussed [them] with religious scholars from Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, the Maghrib, the Uzbeks and India.'[35] Notwithstanding this, perhaps what marked Qāḍīzāde apart, at least in the Ottoman context, was his eagerness to have the practices he opposed uprooted at any cost.[36] This

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[34] Cited in N. Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy', p. 203. It is unclear from Naᶜīmā's statement whether Qāḍīzāde went as far as to support the execution of those caught smoking. In any case, there certainly existed the view among some contemporary observers that Qāḍīzāde's personal campaign against smoking was pivotal, such as the view of one who said, 'Qāḍīzāde preached every Friday from the pulpit of the Hagia Sophia, and wasn't that the reason the coffeehouses were closed and public gatherings were forbidden?' Cited in M.D. Baer, *Honoured by the Glory of Islam,* p. 66.

[35] Qāḍīzāde, *Risāleh,* MS. *Michot 0802,* f. 90v.

[36] Zilfi is of the view that the vision of the Qāḍīzādelis was to return their community back to the "golden age" of early Islam: 'Emulation of the patriarchs became the ideal for the community's behaviour, rarely tried but always valued. The patriarchal golden age is an actuality, its every detail known through the Koran and the life of the Prophet. The community, in its grasp of those details, theoretically holds the blueprint for the age's recapture. At issue was the degree to which the community could stray from primordial practice, the "way" of the Prophet (*Sunna*), without losing its Islamic character and plunging into sin or unbelief'. *Politics of Piety,* p. 135.

said, it is unlikely that he advised his adherents to seek out sinners and force them to be observant Muslims, as has been suggested.[37] If he did demand intervention to stop immoral or illicit practices it would have been within the remit of "enjoining good and forbidding evil" (*al-amr bi-l-ma*ᶜ*rūf wa l-nahy* ᶜ*an al-munkar*), sometimes termed *ḥisba* (literally, taking to account).[38] He would only have promoted violence as a *modus operandi* if he had the support of the authorities.

Though it might be conceded that the energy exerted by Qāḍīzāde to write and preach about the principle of forbidding evil was unprecedented in a society which had a rather liberal attitude towards religious heresies,[39] he was by no means the first Ottoman to draw attention to it; the principle had already been written about at length by Birgili, and before him Ṭaşhköprüzāde.[40] Birgili addressed the issue of forbidding evil in two places

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[37] M. Zilfi, *Politics of Piety,* p. 137.

[38] Whilst the two terms, *ḥisba* and *al-amr bi-l-ma*ᶜ*rūf* are sometimes used synonymously, there is a distinction: the latter refers to the general principle of enjoining good and forbidding wrong, and is traceable back to the earliest scriptural sources; the former, which is a non-Qur'anic term, refers more specifically to the functions of the person entrusted by the authorities to undertake the duty (*muḥtasib*). The *muḥtasib* was first appointed sometime in the 3rd/ 9th century, whilst legal literature first treated the subject in the 5th / 11th century. See Cl. Cahen, R. Mantran, A.K.S. Lambton and A.S. Abzmee Ansari, 'Ḥisba', *EI²*. The most extensive study on the subject of *al-amr bi-l-ma*ᶜ*rūf* in English is M. Cook's, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), a work that usefully includes a very extensive bibliography on the doctrine. Here I mention some of the sources which informed the Ottoman understanding of the issue generally, and the Qāḍīzāde movement in particular: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-amr bi l-ma*ᶜ*rūf wa l-nahy* ᶜ*an al-munkar min Iḥyā'* ᶜ*ulūm al-dīn* (Beirut: 1983); Ṭashköprüzāde (d. 968/1561), *Miftāḥ al-sa*ᶜ*āda,* edited by K. K. Bakrī and ᶜA. Abū l-Nūr (Cairo: Dār al-kutub al-ḥadītha, 1968), 3: 301-10; Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-amr bi l-ma*ᶜ*rūf wa l-nahy* ᶜ*an al-munkar,* edited by Ṣ. Munajjid (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-jadīd,1976); idem., *Al-ḥisba fī l-Islām* (Kuwait: 1983), the translation of which is *Public Duties in Islam: The Institution of the Ḥisba,* translated by M. Holland (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1982). See also, M. Cook*,* 'Al-nahy ᶜan l-munkar', *EI²*.

[39] M.D. Baer says in this regard that prior to Qāḍīzāde's engagement in active reform (or compelling other Muslims to behave piously), "forbidding wrong" had not been a defining feature of Ottoman Sunnism. Earlier influential Muslim scholars, such as Taşköprüzāde (d. 1561), had a very cautious attitude towards the use of violence by ordinary Muslims (i.e. non-state actors) engaging in the practice. He was opposed to 'commoners taking up arms to censure their sinning neighbours and had declared, "God preserve us from those who show fanaticism in religion"'. See *Honored by the Glory of Islam*, p. 65.

[40] See above, note 38.

and, although he did not elaborate on the details, quoted extensively from the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions, aiming thereby to drive home in the mind of his reader the central role of *ḥisba* in preserving the Sharīᶜa.[41] Yet despite his zealousness Birgili departed little from the classical formulation of the doctrine, insofar as he saw its implementation as hierarchised—the authorities had a monopoly over the right to employ violence.[42] M. Cook explains Birgili's position on the basis of his treatment of enjoining the good in *al-Ṭarīqat al-Muḥammadiyya*:

> Birgili states that the duty of *ḥisba* is collective given the power to perform it and the absence of harm; the sinner too is obligated; one must not merely forbid offenders, but must also socially ostracise them; harsh words are employed in situations where leniency has not worked. He categories *ḥisba* into the classical tripartite division of hating an evil with the heart, criticising it with the tongue and stopping it with the hand. He considers that the first of these is incumbent upon all, the second on the scholars, and the third on the state. Birgili holds that one may proceed even where this will lead to certain death; one thereby enters the ranks of the most excellent of martyrs.[43]

It appears that while *ḥisba* remained essentially a hierarchised duty in the thought of Birgili, and was probably also viewed as such by Qāḍīzāde, successive generations of Qāḍīzādeli activists departed from the way of their mentors as they took the duty to be the responsibility of each and every member of society, irrespective of their social standing, in all of its forms—forbidding evil by the heart, the tongue and physically. This of course marked a dramatic shift in Qāḍīzādeli thinking and policy.

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[41] Birgili's most extensive treatment is found in *al-Ṭarīqat al-Muḥammadiyya* (Cairo: 1937) but he also treated the subject in Ottoman Turkish in his *Risāle-i Birgivī* (Üsküdār: Dār ü'ṭ-ṭıbāᶜat il-cedīde, 1805).

[42] M. Cook, *Commanding Right,* pp. 324-325.

[43] M. Cook, *Commanding Right ,* pp. 324-325

It would be useful to consider Qāḍīzāde's stance towards those whom he called "deviant Sufis", particularly since the greater part of his reformist campaign was dedicated to critiquing this group. Qāḍīzāde saved his most stinging attack on practices associated with the Khalwatī order. We know that he blamed the Khalwatīs and, to a lesser degree, the Bektāshīs and Bayrāmīs for the religious laxity of the masses.[44] We know also that he held them responsible for what he and many others considered the beginning of socio-political decline within the Ottoman Empire. What may be surprising, however, is that he and his sympathisers were hardly alone in their condemnation of deviant Sufism. On the contrary, it seems their attitude was typical of many of the ᶜulamā' of the time. The ᶜulamā' had always believed themselves to be the vanguard of the Muslims and, in fact, many were very successful in this role. They typically resided in the great centres of the Empire and were keen to maintain their positions of authority both within higher officialdom and in the countryside. More specifically, ᶜulamā' opposition to the Khalwatīs and those orders which shared similar devotional regimen was predicated on two key factors. The first was political: the Khalwatīs were a threat to the Ottoman State because of their Shīᶜī affinities; the second was doctrinal: in their adoption of extra-scriptural religious practices which had no sanction in the Sharīᶜa, the sacred law was somehow existentially threatened. Martin says, 'To many of the informed ᶜulamā', the beginnings of the Khalwatiya—and some other orders like the Badr al-Diniya, Baktashiya, and the Bayramiya—were suspect because they could be equated with the origins of the hostile

[44] Ş. Çavuşoğlu, 'Kadızādeliler', *İA*, p. 101; M. Zilfi, *Politics of Piety,* p. 133ff.

Safavids. As the *silsilas* of these orders show, many of the forefathers of the Safavid order, like the Shaykhs Saif al-Din of Ardabil and Ibrahim Zahid of Gilan, reappear in the Khalwati and other chains of descent'.[45]

As for the Khalwatīs, they had already begun a process of internal reform, perhaps under the dual pressures of orthodox censure and suspicion of the authorities. So by the middle of the 16th century, as hostilities intensified between the Sunnī Ottomans and the Shīᶜī Safavids, there is evidence pointing to the fact that the order concealing the existence of Shīᶜī imams within its *silsila* by erasing them altogether as part of its movement in the direction of Sharīᶜa-styled reform.[46] The order also became increasingly detached from the masses in its attempt to shake free from various negatively-perceived ritual practices and a number of controversial affiliations. This internal reform was highly effective for the Khalwatīs, particularly during the reigns of Süleymān and Selīm II. During these periods, the Khalwatīs were able to expand their numbers in Istanbul and to establish new *tekkes*. They achieved the same results in the Anatolian provinces.[47] Thus by the time of Qāḍīzāde's opposition to them in the seventeenth century, the Khalwatīs had already maneuvered themselves into a position of political favour. Qāḍīzade was probably deeply troubled by this, and likely aware that nothing less than a virulent campaign against them

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[45] B.G. Martin, 'Khalwati Order of Dervishes', p. 284.

[46] Martin notes that the Shīᶜī Safawiyya order and the Khalwatīs had in common five out of twelve imams in the standard Twelver Shīᶜī series. He suggests that the two orders were like "twin brothers", and had the Khalwatīs gone elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire it might have adopted a completely Shīᶜī doctrine. See 'Khalwati Order of Dervishes', p. 284.

[47] Martin, 'Khalwati Order of Dervishes', p. 285.

would be necessary to unhinge their position. His debates with Siwāsī and his motions against the Khalwatīs could therefore be interpreted against this backdrop.

Qāḍīzāde would probably have cherished the prospect of personally leading a war of attrition against the Khalwatīs. Unfortunately for him, even when his relationship with Murād IV was at its closest, his Khalwatī counterparts—most particularly Siwāsī Efendi—were also the beneficiaries of the Sultan's patronage. At best, therefore, Qāḍīzāde would only be able to witness relatively low-level reforms within Ottoman society, such as the closing down of coffeehouses. In any case, it is highly likely that Murād IV would have backed only those proposals of Qāḍīzāde that would have been advantageous to his own rule—so, for example, the closure of coffeehouses served principally to clamp down on public dissent and only secondarily so that his subjects adhered to the Sharīᶜa.[48]

Qāḍīzāde, for the remainder of his life, remained an intimate of Murād IV. Despite the close relationship that he forged with the Sultan, it was his Qāḍīzādeli successors who would fully exploit the inroads he had made into higher officialdom. So by the 1640s the movement came to hold a virtual monopoly on the religious agenda of the Seraglio, especially among the halberdiers, palace guards, sweet makers, gatekeepers, servants of the inner palace, harem eunuchs, artisans and market-place merchants. Members of these well-connected groups, according to Baer, served as mediators 'proselytizing the

[48] On Murād IV's own interest in seeing the closure of coffeehouses, see M. Zilfi, *Politics of Piety,* pp. 138-139. Also, Rycaut condemnation of Ottoman coffeehouses is revealing. For him, they were 'melancholy places where Seditions were vented, where reflections were made on all occurrences of State & discontents published and aggravated.' See *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 130.

Qāḍīzādeli path to piety'.[49] In what has been described as the second phase of the Qāḍīzādelī campaign under the leadership of Üsṭüwānī Meḥmed Efendi[50] affairs began to take a more bloody turn. Backed by the support of the Seraglio and from segments of the general public, the Qāḍīzādelis received official sanction to use violence against their opponents. Most often members of particular Sufi orders would be on the receiving end of this violence, but frankly anyone involved in an activity that the Qāḍīzādelis had flagged as immoral was liable to suffer at their hands. They were also more than ready to anathematise those whom they considered perpetrators of heresies. Baer notes that the most unsettling aspect of Qāḍīzādeli condemnations was their labelling as acts of disbelief (*kufr*) even those common practices which the Sharīᶜa accommodated. These included invoking blessings on another by saying, 'God be pleased with him'; embellishing the reading of the Qur'an; chanting the call to prayer with a musical tone; invoking blessing on Muhammad by offering the benediction, 'May God shower benedictions upon him and bless him'; and supererogatory services of worship performed on the night of the first Friday of the month of Rajab and the night of the twelfth of the same month, the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet, and the Night of Power and the twenty-seventh night of Ramadan.[51]

When it came to the Khalwatīs and the Mawlawīs, it was primarily a fatwa of Shaykh al-Islām Bahā'ī Efendi that declared smoking a licit act which would serve as pretext for

[49] M.D. Baer, *Honoured by the Glory of Islam,* p. 69.

[50] N. Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy', especially p. 215; Çavuşoğlu, 'The Kādizādelī Movement', especially p. 107.

[51] M.D. Baer, *Honoured by the Glory of Islam,* p. 66.

Qāḍīzādeli hostilities. Qāḍīzāde himself had already condemned the fatwa in a number of sermons and writings.[52] Other pretexts for singling out these orders included a number of devotional regimen adopted by these orders which the Qāḍīzādelis had decided were innovations (*bidca*). These took place in *tekke*s and so, just as smoking justified the razing of coffee-houses, the *raqṣ* and *dawarān* justified entering *tekke*s to forbid the evil being carried out within them. In 1650 the Qāḍīzādelis even managed to acquire a court-order (*fermān*) from the Grand Vizier Melek Aḥmad Pasha ordering the demolition of several *tekkes* belonging to the Khalwatīs and Mawlawīs. When the *fermān* was delivered the Qāḍīzādelis took it upon themselves to implement it with the help, of course, of imperial soldiers. Their first attack was launched on the Khalwatī *tekke* in Demür Qapu; in this case, they not only destroyed the building but they also physically attacked those who were in the *tekke*. This policy of violence would continue for at least a decade until the age of the Grand Vizier Köprülü Meḥmed. Under pressure from influential segments of Ottoman high officialdom that were understandably perturbed by Qāḍīzādeli violence, Köprülü eventually circumscribed the activities of the Qāḍīzādelis, exiling several of its leading members. Qāḍīzādeli over-zealousness would lead eventually to their own fall from grace.

In all, Qāḍīzāde was a complex figure whose life is not easy pigeonhole. Antagonistic towards the permissive attitude of certain Sufis he certainly was yet he was certainly not an absolute opponent of Sufism. The embeddedness of Sufism within the Ottoman

[52] N. Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy', p. 237.

religious fabric would have precluded too harsh a stance since it is very unlikely that Qāḍīzāde would ever have been able to rise within the ranks of the *wāᶜiẓ* hierarchy, or indeed enjoy the association of the ruling elite, if he had not been an affiliate or at least loosely connected with one of the established Sufi orders. We know that Sultan Murād IV, himself an ardent supporter of various aspects of the Qāḍīzādeli reform campaign, had strong personal ties with the Sufi orders, among them the Khalwatīs. His mother, Kösem Mahpeyker (d. 1061/1651), was a generous Khalwatī benefactress and Murād, on his accession in 1623, had been girded with the dynastic sword by Shaykh ᶜAzīz Maḥmūd Hüdā'ī (d. 1037/1628-29). During the course of his reign he became fond of the Mawlawī Shaykh Doğani Aḥmad Dede who spent hours at the palace, often performing the Mawlawī *samāᶜ* expressly for the Sultan.[53] Complexity also surrounds the extent to which he can be interpreted as a violent man. We must not confuse Qāḍīzāde with activists of a later time, at least not until a time when more evidence exists that can support this. It is worth considering when reflecting on Qāḍīzāde's personal role in the reform campaign that, while he was criticised by some Ottoman observers for his harsh views on a variety of religious and social customs, all of which he considered contraventions of the Sharīᶜa, he himself was spared the severest condemnation of the chroniclers and biographers; these in fact were reserved for activists involved with the later movement, who were prepared to personally engage with violence in order to create the particular socio-religious reality they so longed for.

[53] M. Zilfi, *Politics of Piety,* pp. 139-140.

The Literature

The Qāḍīzādelis first attracted the attention of serious Western scholarship around three decades ago. This relatively recent interest is perhaps linked to the need for understanding cataclysmic events in recent Muslim political history such as the Iranian Revolution and the revivalist phenomena associated with it, as well as a developing interest in the pre-modern antecedents of such phenomena. The violence which early Ottoman historians and chroniclers attribute to the Qāḍīzādelis, and the apparent continuities between the movement and modern-day Muslim fundamentalism, has perhaps further increased the interest among scholars and historians. Studies on the Qāḍīzādelis, much like the literature on Islamic fundamentalism (with few exceptions), reflects a clear bias against the movement and its programme for reform—this is perhaps due, to a lesser or greater extent, to the natural disdain which violence can evoke. But there is also the disappointing truth that much of the source material of recent scholarship has come from the opponents of the Qāḍīzādelis. The polemic of early biographers, chroniclers and other Ottoman observers of the time, some native, others foreign, has often been accepted without scrutiny. Most contemporaneous accounts viewed Qāḍīzāde's reform campaign unfavourably; the recent studies largely reflect the same attitude.

Apart from associated problems of the historical accuracy of these accounts which form the basis of so much recent scholarship on the Qāḍīzādelis, there is a further problem of

an ostensible lack of interest in understanding the movement and its programme for reform via an exploration of the texts written by the actors themselves. Given the large corpus of works associated with the movement, this lack of interest strikes as unusual. It would not, however, be the first time that research on Islamic revivalism and reform has been skewed in favour of biographical accounts and chronicles while at the same time neglecting an extant textual corpus.[54]

Several contemporary and near-contemporary Ottoman chroniclers provide most of what we know about the Qāḍīzādelis. One of the most prominent of the contemporary histories written shortly after the era of the Qāḍīzadelis was that of Mustafa Naᶜīmā (d. 1128/1716).[55] His chronicle of events is also one of the lengthiest and most detailed accounts. Treating the movement under the events of the year 1066/1656, Naᶜīmā preambles his account with an outline of the dispute between the ᶜulamā' and the Sufis.[56] After providing his audience with biographies of the major Qāḍīzādeli protagonists, and detailing a list of nineteen controversies which constituted the Qāḍīzādeli programme of reform, Naᶜīmā concludes by reporting stories replete with examples of Qāḍīzādeli notoriety in order to 'demonstrate their insincerity and hypocrisy'.[57] Naᶜīmā voices a particularly hostile attitude towards the Qāḍīzādelis, portraying them as a destructive and

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[54] O'Fahey flags this very problem in his assessment of the research written on Neo-Sufism. See his introduction to *Enigmatic Saint: Ahmad Ibn Idris and the Idrisi Tradition* (London: Hurst & Company, 1990).

[55] Naᶜīmā, or Muṣṭafā Naᶜīm, was born in Aleppo, probably in 1065/1655, the son of a Janissary commander. See C. Woodhead, 'Naᶜīmā', *EI*^{2}.

[56] Naᶜīmā, *Tārī*218 :6 ,*ḥ*.

[57] Nacīmā, *Tārīḥ*, 6: 226-230.

uncouth mob. Öztürk suggests that Naᶜīmā's hostility may have been due to his affiliation with the Bektāshī order, which was harshly denounced by the Qāḍīzādelis.[58] It is also possible that he was merely echoing the sentiments of his primary sources, the historians Vecīhī Ḥasan Efendi (d. 1081/1670) and Behceti Ibrāhīm Efendi (d. 1094/1683).[59]

Other Ottoman observers include ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān ᶜAbdī Pāşā (d. 1103/1692), who recorded the events in which the movement became embroiled. He wrote a damning report describing Üşṭüwānī, Sayyid Muṣṭafā and Türk Aḥmad, key Qāḍīzādeli activists from the later period, as 'gossipers and disturbers of the public peace by their sermons'.[60] Silāḥdār Meḥmed Aga (d. 1136/1724) adopted a similarly critical stance.[61] But perhaps most interesting of these is the view of the well-known Ottoman writer and traveller Evliyā' Çelebi (d. 1095/1684), who provides what was almost certainly the position of high officialdom towards the Qāḍīzādelis. Relating an anecdote about a Qāḍīzādeli activist from Tire who was engaged in 'forbidding evil' (*nahy ᶜan al-munkar*) within his community, Evliyā' takes an obviously scornful tone towards the man, deeming the duty

[58] N. Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy', p. 4. For a complete survey of the early chronicles and biographical accounts which cover the 17th century, see Öztürk's introduction, ibid, pp. 1-16.

[59] Vecīhī Ḥasan Efendi says that Meḥmet Qāḍīzāde's aim was to become attached to Murād IV by issuing edicts in support of his efforts to ban alcohol and tobacco. Vecīhī describes the movement after Qāḍīzāde as being a group 'chasing fame and high positions' in *Tārīḥ-i Vecīhī*, cited in N. Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy'. Behcetī Ibrāhīm Efendi, who was the imām of Köprülüzāde Ḥāfiẓ Aḥmad Pāşā describes the motive of the Qāḍīzādelis as being the 'attainment of renown' in *Tārīḥ-i Sūlāle-i Köprülü*, cited in Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy'. For more details about both of their accounts, refer to Ş. Çavuşoğlu, 'The Kādizādelī Movement', pp. 8-10.

[60] ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān ᶜAbdī Pāşā, *Vekāyi nāme-i Sulṭān Meḥmed Rābiᶜ,* Süleymāniye library, MS. Hafid Efendi 250, f. 22v, cited in Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy'.

[61] *Silāḥdār Tāriḥī* (Istanbul, 1928), 1: 57-59, cited in Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy'.

and right to apply this principle of correction within the exclusive ambit of the ruler and his officials.[62]

The views of the English traveller, Sir Paul Rycaut (d. 1700), who was Secretary to the Ambassador in Istanbul and consul in Izmir, are interesting since they represent a contemporaneous Western perspective which, though not always based on first-hand information, may also have echoed the attitudes towards the Qāḍīzādelis within Ottoman high society. Rycaut says the following:[63]

> [This is]a sect sprung up in the time of *Sultan Morat,* whose chief propagator was one Birgali Effendi [...] This poisonous Doctrine is so infectious, that it is crept into the Chambers of the *Seraglio,* into the apartments of the Ladies and Eunuchs, and found entertainment with the *Pasha's* and their whole Court [...] the Sect of Kadizadeli before mentioned, is of a melancholy and stoical temper, admitting of no musick, cheerful or light discourses, but confine themselves to a set gravity; in publick as well as private they make a continual mention of God, by never wearied repetition of these words, *Ilahe ila Ellah;* that is, I profess there is one God: there are some of these that will fit whole nights bending their bodies towards the Earth, reciting those words with a most doleful and lamentable Note; they are exact and most punctual in the observation of the rules of Religion, and generally addict themselves to the study of their Civil Law, in which they use constant exercises in arguing, opposing and answering, whereby to leave no point undiscovered or not discussed. In short, they are highly pharisaical in all their comportment, great admirers of themselves, and scorners of others that conform not to their tenets, scarce affording them a salutation or common communication; they refuse to marry their sons with those of a different rite; but amongst themselves they observe a certain policy; they admonish and correct the

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[62] *Seyāḥatnāme* (*Tārīḥ-i Seyyāḥ*), cited in Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy'. See also Robert Dankoff, *Evliya Çelebi in Bitlis* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990).

[63] Other European diplomats and travellers whose writings constitute primary sources for the 17th century Ottoman religious milieu include J. Thévenot's *L'Empire dy Grand Turc Vu par Un Sujet de Louis XIV: Jean Thévenot* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1965) and Louis Laurent D'Arvieux's *Mémoires du Chevalier d'Arvieux,* 6 vols. (Paris: C.J.B. Beléspine, 1735), esp. 4: 390-391.

> disorderly; and such who are not bettered by their persuasions they reject and excommunicate from their Society. These are the most part tradesmen, whose sedentary life affords opportunity and nutriment to a melancholy, and distempered fancy.[64]

Rycaut, who spent eighteen years in the Ottoman lands as a diplomat, describes the Qāḍīzādelis as a recently evolved sect in Turkish lands, a dangerous one in his estimation because of the ability they had to stir up the masses into rebellion. His contempt for the movement is perhaps explained by his diplomatic role, and by the fact that his account was probably informed by members of Ottoman high officialdom. In any case, his account seems reliable inasmuch as it conforms to other sources, including Qaḍīzadeli writings, especially when he describes them as an austere and conservative folk that were given to religious rites and worship.[65]

A rather more balanced account of the Qāḍīzādelis, inasmuch as it reflects a more cautious approach in its critique, is that of Kātib Çelebi. His is a refreshing variation on the dominant sentiment of contempt shown by other contemporaneous and near-contemporary observers, and is as much prescriptive of what best-practice is as far as religion goes, as it is descriptive of the Qāḍīzādelis and their opponents. *Mīzān al-Ḥaqq* was Kātib Çelebi's last work, completed in 1656. In this text he details the points of

[64] Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire,* pp. 129-131.

[65] In a useful article on how Rycaut's travelogue should be read, L. Darling cautions that Rycaut's account was not simply intended by him for a common readership, but as he states in his acknowledgement, 'as a matter worthy of the consideration, or concernment of our Kings or our Governors'. It would thus be dangerous to consider it a straightforward eyewitness account of the Ottoman people and government in the seventeenth century. See L. Darling, 'Ottoman Politics through British Eyes: Paul Rycaut's "The Present State of the Ottoman Empire", *Journal of World History,* 5 (1994), pp. 71-97, esp. p. 90.

controversy related to doctrine, law and social custom which locked Qāḍīzāde and Siwāsī in battle, and by extension all those who would take one or the other side. The central message of the *Mīzān'*s author, which he enunciates at the close of virtually every chapter, is the futility of trying to force people to abandon practices which, though lacking sanction according to the strict letter of the Sharīᶜa, do not in any serious way conflict with it either, especially those that have become entrenched. According to the English translator of the text, '[*Mīzān al-ḥaqq*] breathes a spirit of liberalism and good sense, enlivened with a mordant humour. The author is never afraid of speaking his mind: if he thinks that a Shaykh al-Islam is exhibiting raving lunacy, or if some other distinguished person is talking like a pompous prig or a gibbering idiot, he says so.'[66] Beyond this, the accuracy of the *Mīzān* may be corroborated by its frequent consistency with key texts associated with the Qāḍīzādelis.

The tenor of the secondary sources does not depart significantly from that of the primary sources. Of particular note are the views of Uzunçarşili and Inalçik. [67] The latter, in a chapter entitled 'The Triumph of Fanaticism', describes the actions of Qāḍīzāde and his followers as nothing less than religious fanaticism. Explaining that at the heart of their cause was 'the rooting out of innovations', Inalçik submits the following assessment of the movement:

[66] G. Lewis, *The Balance of Truth,* p. 12.

[67] Uzunçarşili, *Osmanli Tarihi,* 1: 343-367; H. Inalçik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600.* Translated by Norman Itzkowitz and Colin Imber (New York: Praeger, 1973).

> Among the Ottoman official circles, the general view of 'innovation' was based on the tolerant hanafite concept of icmā as a basis for religious and legal opinions. Against this, Mehmed of Birgi and the fakīs adopted the strict traditionalism of the *hanbalites.* These regarded as contrary to Islam any innovation which an objective interpretation of the Koran and the sunna could not admit. They opposed mysticism and any esoteric interpretation of the principles of religion. In our own day the modernization of Islamic societies has again caused a collision of these two opposing views.[68]

Disappointingly, the view expressed does little justice to the Qāḍīzādelis: it makes no attempt to understand the nuances related to the movement's reform programme and anachronistically links modern Muslim conservatism with the revivalism of a very different age and environment.

There are very few serious studies on the Qāḍīzādelis. Attention, when paid, is mostly tangential and deals primarily with the movement from the mid to late-seventeenth century.[69] The several dedicated studies are considered below.

The PhD thesis of Necati Öztürk argues that the *raison d'être* of the Qāḍīzādelis was to uphold the doctrine of *al-amr bi l-maᶜrūf wa l-nahy ᶜan al-munkar.*[70] Öztürk, drawing from early chronicles, divides the movement into three distinct phases, each differentiated both in terms of the mode of activism and the extent of influence. He charts the first phase of the movement as being the era of Birgili, the intellectual forefather, and his disciple Qāḍīzāde; the second phase charts the leadership of the movement under

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[68] H. Inalçik, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 185.

[69] See, for example, M.A. Cook, *Commanding Good*, pp. 323-329; and M.D. Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam*.

[70] N. Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy'.

Üsṭüwānī and ᶜAbdül Aḥad Nūrī (d. 1061/1650); the final phase charts Wānī Efendi's continuation of the earlier programme of reform, which also signaled the death of the movement. Despite the contribution Öztürk makes to our understanding of some of the key religious controversies of the time, and his useful bibliography of texts and translations, his thesis is lacking on several counts. He mistakenly presents the Qāḍīzādelis as having been absolutely opposed to Sufism: whilst it is true that they were opposed to the Khalwatī and Mawlawī orders, and others of similar kind, nothing in the key texts of the movement would indicate an *in toto* rejection of Sufism. Öztürk submits this without substantiation. In fact, Sufism was very much embedded in Ottoman consciousness and had a significant presence in daily religious practice. Any group involved in proselytisation that rejected outright Sufism would automatically undermine itself. It is very unlikely that the Qāḍīzādelis would have achieved their dramatic hold over Ottoman political and religious society, and made the inroads that they managed to make, had they cast themselves as opponents of Sufism. Öztürk's thesis is also problematic for his reading of the Qāḍīzādelis through the lens of contemporary Salafī ideology. His insistence that the movement was Salafī—which is predicated on the assertion that it was influenced by the Ḥanbalī tradition—ignores the continuities between the movement and its own Ottoman Ḥanafī context.[71] Though the influence of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim on the movement's ideas are to be seen clearly, equally discernible is the mark of Ḥanafī law, Māturīdī dogma and indeed Sufism. Öztürk not

[71] For Öztürk's discussion of the Taymiyyan, Ḥanbalī influence on the Qāḍīzādelis, see 'Islamic Orthodoxy', p. 132ff. The Salafī outlook of the Qāḍīzādelis is at one point described by Öztürk as "intolerant" and "narrow-minded". See 'Islamic Orthodoxy', p. 27.

only fails to position the Qāḍīzādelis correctly on the religious map, but he also struggles to situate them within the Ottoman social hierarchy. He writes about the Qāḍīzādelis as though they were a group distinct from both the ᶜulamā' and popular preachers. At times, his description of them oscillates between treating them as sermonists (*wāᶜiẓ*) of ᶜulamā' stock[72] and sermonists who were opponents of the ᶜulamā'.[73] The truth is of course that while many associated with the movement were of non-scholars, the leadership was invariably extracted from the Ottoman learned institution.

Another seminal study is the PhD thesis of Çavuşoğlu.[74] Much like Öztürk, she presents a rich survey of much of the primary and secondary source material, both Western and Turkish. Çavuşoğlu also sees the movement as having existed in three-phases, and places particular emphasis on the supposed political, economic and moral crisis of the seventeenth century, which she believes created the fertile ground necessary for the germination of Qāḍīzādeli rhetoric and activism. Despite the contributions of Çavuşoğlu's thesis, particularly the very useful translations of key Qāḍīzādeli texts, her own analysis departs little from Öztürk's. To her credit, Çavuşoğlu does attempt a more nuanced analysis of the ideological outlook of the Qāḍīzādelis. In her estimation, the Qāḍīzādelis are best understood as "Sharīᶜa-minded" reformers to be contrasted with the alternative reformist trend that favoured the Qānūn over the Sharīᶜa. This approach is in fact taken from Kafadar, who justified this categorisation as follows:

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[72] N. Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy', pp. 61-62.

[73] N. Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy', pp. 418-421.

[74] Ş. Çavuşoğlu, 'The Kādīzādelī movement'.

> Ottoman intellectual history should take note of at least two distinct and often rival attitudes within the decline-and-reform discourse of the post-Süleymānic age [...] the vision of an exemplary Ottoman order, with a mature political-legal-social paradigm, located in a classical age stretching from Meḥmed the Conqueror to Süleymān the Lawgiver, is generally presented as if it were the only Ottoman perspective on Ottoman history. With its emphasis on the *kānūn,* this might be considered the dominant position represented by the better-known reformists like ᶜAlī, Koçi Bey, Hezārfen Hüseyin. It would be more accurate, however, to regard this *kānūn*-minded viewpoint as only one position, related to specific social groups which wanted to revive "the Ottoman tradition" as they understood it and as it suited them [...] We must here consider at least one other strand of thought in Ottoman cultural history which has hitherto been either neglected or underrated in terms of its contribution to the decline and reform discourse. This *selefī* ("fundamentalist") strand, with deep roots and influential representatives in earlier Islamic history, ran through Ottoman intellectual life over many centuries and did not fail to produce its own critical stance on the trajectory of the Ottoman order, particularly in the post-Süleymānic age. For this specific and not insignificant group, the "golden age" paradigm was particularly meaningful, but there was only one golden age and that was way back in the time of the *selef,* namely Prophet Muhammad and his companions.[75]

With the expression '*selefī* strand', Kafadar refers to reformers such as Birgili and Qāḍīzāde. To describe them in such terms is again to commit the error of projecting back a modern reality. Equally problematic is the use of the term "fundamentalist" in relation to the Qāḍīzādelis, which although in currency at the time of Kafadar's writing, has since been abandoned by many in the humanities and social sciences, particularly in the context of studying contemporary Islamist movements.[76]

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[75] C. Kafadar, 'The Myth of the Golden Age', p. 42. On the "golden age" paradigm, see also M. Zilfi, *Politics of Piety,* p. 135.

[76] On the conceptual problems with the term "fundamentalism", see D.M. Varisco, "Inventing Islamism: The Violence of Rhetoric," in *Islamism: Contested Perspectives on Political Islam,* edited by R.C. Martin and A. Barzegar (California: Stanford University Press, 2010).

There are further complexities which render problematic the analytical categories adopted by Kafadar to describe the Qāḍīzādelis. To create a dichotomy of Ottoman intellectual life during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on the basis of those in favour of the Sharīᶜa and those in favour of Qānūn both simplifies the historical reality as well as obfuscates the nexus between the Sharīᶜa and Qānūn in Islamic history.[77] The two were enmeshed, and arguably had existed coterminously since the earliest formulation of Muslim legal theory.[78] More importantly, the deployment of these terms obscures the foundations upon which scholars and thinkers of the period were predicating their responses to the socio-political status-quo. Birgili, who critiqued the cash-waqf system,[79] is a good example of a scholar who does not fit neatly into either category and therefore serves to highlight how problematic this approach to Ottoman intellectual history is. Birgili's position on the cash-waqf—that it was a dangerous deviation from the Sharīᶜa—should, according to Kafadar's categories, be understood as an example of "Sharīᶜa-minded" reform. In contradistinction, the support of the Shaykh al-Islām of the time, Abū l-Suᶜūd Efendi (d. 981/1574), for this mode of transaction should be understood as

[77] Here it is useful to consider the nature of the Sharīᶜa and Qānūn, and the relationship between the two systems which, for centuries, co-existed to form the Ottoman law. Sharīᶜa in the context of Ottoman Turkey was broadly synonymous with the Ḥanafī legal tradition, as preserved in case law and jurisprudential treatises. Imber notes that before the mid-nineteenth century the Sharīᶜa had 'undisputed intellectual and ideological hegemony throughout the Islamic world'. However, it could not serve as the sole basis of the legal system because it was historically bound to seventh century Arabia. It therefore had to exist alongside a parallel set of laws drawn from extra-scriptural sources. Qānūn was the term used for these laws, which were designed to complement rather than conflict with Sharīᶜa injunctions. See *Ebu's-suᶜud: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 40.

[78] This is especially so if the principle of public interest (*maṣlaḥa*) is considered, an early juristic tool used to formulate laws that had no obvious foundation in the Sharīᶜa. On this, see H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2003), pp. 351-368.

[79] In general, a *waqf* is the endowment of property for charitable purposes. See R. Peters, 'Wakf', *EI*[2].

"Qānūn-mindedness". Whatever the appeal in describing the approaches in this way—after all, the cash-waqfs, were an example of where the Sharīᶜa was flagrantly contravened—Abū l-Suᶜūd, as part of his defence of the cash-waqf, deployed classical Ḥanafī jurisprudence. He cited the fatwas of Muhammad al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805) and Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798), both of whom declared endowments on moveables as permissible, contrary to the view of many jurists. He then argued that cash is a moveable and so can be made the basis of an endowment. Even more controversially, he employed a legal ruse (*ḥīla*) to allow the charging of interest on loans made on cash-waqfs—it was as interest bearing loans that cash-waqfs derived their income.[80] What becomes clear from this is that Abū l-Suᶜūd predicated his justification for the permissibility of cash-waqfs on Muslim legal theory, *uṣūl al-fiqh*—the theoretical framework employed to extend the jurisdiction of the Sharīᶜa. It is thus inaccurate to describe his sanctioning of cash-waqfs as somehow indicative of "*Qānūn*-mindedness". As regards Birgili's position, he was not only opposed to cash-waqfs because they were in conflict with clear precepts of the Sharīᶜa; he also deployed extra-scriptural reasoning, for example is his argument that the interest earned on loans had become widespread in his time and were

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[80] Imber explains the detailed workings of this legal stratagem in his study of the Islamic legal tradition in the age of Abū Ṣuᶜūd Efendi. The model was based on an old trick for circumventing the prohibition on usury. Here it is set out as a fatwa: 'To be valid, how should a legal transaction be carried out? *Answer*: The trustee legally sells some merchandise to ᶜAmr for 1,100 aqches. He delivers the merchandise to ᶜAmr who, after taking possession, sells it to Bekr for 1,000 aqches. After receiving [the merchandise], Bekr says: 'Give the money for it to Zeyd' and gives the merchandise to the trustee as a pledge for 1,000 aqches. This has been considered permissible.' According to Imber the device disguised a loan at interest as a double sale and an unredeemed pledge and also that most trustees were unlikely to have resorted to this rather burdensome trick. Records suggest that few founders of trusts required borrowers to deposit a pledge with the trustee, or to name a guarantor, which suggests that they lent the money and received interest directly. This trick was for those of more religious persuasion for who this stratagem would make interest allowable. See *Ebu's-suᶜud: The Islamic Legal Tradition*, p.145. It is noteworthy that Abū l-Suᶜūd Efendi was not the first to permit cash-waqfs. Mandeville, who undertook extensive research on cash-waqfs in the Ottoman Empire, found that the earliest recorded usage of cash-waqfs and interest earnings on them dated back to the first half of the fifteenth century. For this, see his article, 'Usurious Piety: The Cash Waqf Controversy in the Ottoman Empire', *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 10 (August, 1979), pp. 289-308.

demonstrably threatening the social order. Interest was, according to this logic, in flagrant conflict with public interest as well as scripture. He wrote several rejoinders on Abū l-Su^{c}ūd's position, each constructed on the basis of legal (*shar^{c}ī*) and rational (*^{c}aqlī*) arguments. Two in particular were decisive critiques which threw the debate wide open for a long time to come. The first was his *al-Ajwibat al-ḥāsima li-^{c}urūq al-shibhat al-qāsima—Zealous Answers to the Roots of Divisive Doubts*, following the scholastic form and argument of Çivizade but containing a far more robust and detailed analysis of the problem.[81] The second treatise, which contains Birgili's clearest statement regarding the impermissibility of interest bearing loans, *Al-sayf al-sārim fi ^{c}adam jawāz waqf al-manqūl wa l-darāhim—The Sharp Sword for the Inadmissibility of the Movable and Cash Waqfs,* is particularly interesting:

> Thus has the invalidity of the cash waqf been exposed. In it there are the sources of many evils. One is the non-payment of the ordained zakāt. A second is the interruption of the regular course of inheritance, an adjudging and execution of testaments involving cash waqf despite suspicions as to its validity, thus withholding truth from the truthful, an ugly oppression. A third, the seizing of the substance of the waqf by its administrators […] A fourth, the man who makes a cash waqf will become poor, despite what he thinks […] A fifth, that cash waqf is in little-esteemed books wherein joint partnership, commerce, and the like is mentioned. Now in our day they profit from usury in the very fashion that the Prophet of God censured. The scholars also censured it, made clear its sinfulness. A sixth, that most of the waqf administrators are ignorant and don't recognise the pictures of usury in the Book; they make profit with loans and sale. Any loan from which profit is made is usurious. Some of them lead a dissolute life, taking interest without

[81] According to Mandeville, Birgili, as the outstanding Arabic grammarian of his day and lifelong teacher of law was on firm ground in this treatise, methodically unpicking Ebū l-Su^{c}ūd's argument: 'Words and sentences out of context, classics misquoted, manipulations of meaning, irrelevant citations, they are all brought out disdainfully for the academic world to see.' Mandeville is in no doubt that Birgili was the superior scholar. See J. Mandeville, 'Usurious Piety', p. 304.

> even going through the motions of using legally permissible devices to do so.[82]

As Mandeville perceptively notes, one would have to concede that Birgili produces the strongest rational (i.e. non-Shar^{c}ī) arguments in support of his position. He argues that moveables should not be permitted for use as waqfs since they can pass hands, which undermines the *raison d'être* of this religious institution. With regards to the problem of usury, the protection of the economically disadvantaged is the *ratio legis* which underpins the Qur'anic and *ḥadīth*-based prohibition. Birgili sees the interest charged on loans from cash-waqfs as exploitative and the legal stratagem which seeks to render it permissible as no more than a circumvention of a clear-cut rule. In light of this, the inadequacy of the terms "*Sharī^{c}a*-minded" and "*Qānūn*-minded" as descriptions of the oppositional positions adopted by Birgili and Abū l-Su^{c}ūd becomes clear. Though seeking to justify Qānūn laws which legitimised cash-waqfs and the interest-based profits associated with them, Abū l-Su^{c}ūd's method of argumentation is difficult to distinguish from Birgili for his use of Sharī^{c}a-based arguments. For Abū l-Su^{c}ūd, then, the Sharī^{c}a continues to be the *Grundnorm* of his legal attitude; at no point does he allow for a circumvention of the Sharī^{c}a towards a completely reason-based vindication of the Qānūn law.

Çavuşoğlu seems not to be aware of the problems associated with Kafadar's categories and proceeds to use them as a central element of her analysis: 'The followers of Kādizāde

[82] Cited in J. Mandeville, 'Usurious Piety', pp. 305-306.

saw obedience to and application of the serīᶜat as the one and only solution to Ottoman decline. They can therefore be considered serīᶜat-minded reformers as opposed to the Ottoman intellectuals of the post-Suleimanic age for whom the idea of "kānūn" was the essential element of reform.'[83] In an attempt to delimit the term "Sharīᶜa-minded" Çavuşoğlu describes the Qāḍīzādelis as *Salafi*s, but unfortunately this has the adverse effect of further obfuscating matters rather than illuminating the ideological standpoint of the movement. Going beyond both Kafadar and Öztürk, Çavuşoğlu bifurcates the whole of Islamic intellectual history into *Salafi* and non-*Salafi,* perhaps deeming this a necessary move to 'trace back the origin of Kādizādeli thought to the selefī tradition'—a tradition which she suggests, 'represented the traditional-conservative trend in Islam which came to be characterised by its emphasis on preserving the purity of Islam extant during the time of the Prophet and the Four Righteous Caliphs'.[84] A further problem with Çavuşoğlu's study is her positioning of the Qāḍīzādelis as opponents of Sufis: 'With the stated purpose of restoring the purity of the Islam extant during the time of the Prophet and the Four Righteous Caliphs [the Kādizādelis] rejected all religious practices which had emerged in subsequent periods as bidᶜats (innovations), and they targeted the activities of Sufis, the most obvious bearers of these bidᶜats in seventeenth-century Ottoman society.'[85] At best the Qāḍīzādelis are constructed by Çavuşoğlu as proto-

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[83] Ş. Çavuşoğlu, 'The Kādizādelī movement', p. 37.

[84] Ş. Çavuşoğlu further says, 'The selefīs strictly opposed the 'eṣḥābü'r-re'y' who used reason and individual opinion. They placed absolute reliance on the traditions of the Prophet [...] at various periods in Islamic intellectual history, selefī tendencies culminated in polemical works and movements opposing various other tendencies such as the rationalism of the "ehlü'l-kiyās" [...]'. See 'The Kādizādelī movement', p. 37.

[85] Ş. Çavuşoğlu, 'The Kādizādelī movement' p. 1. Elsewhere, Çavuşoğlu states that her inquiry will proceed with a focus primarily on "the tension between the Sufis and the Kādizādelīs". See 'The Kādizādelī movement', p. 23.

Wahhābīs; at worst they are constructed as qiyās-rejecting Ẓāhirīs. Both are mythical constructions that allow no recognition of the fact that they were adherents of Ḥanafī law and Māturīdī doctrine. As good Ḥanafīs they would have comfortably accommodated juristic analogy (*qiyās*), juristic preference (*istiḥsān*), public welfare (*maṣlaḥa*) and, most importantly, custom (*ᶜurf*).[86] Birgili, for example, wrote several treatises on Ḥanafī law and clearly identifies Māturīdī creed as orthodox dogma in *al-Ṭarīqat al-Muḥammadiyya* and the *Risāleh.* As intellectual heirs of Birgili, but also as products of the Ottoman madrasa system which was built on the dual pillars of Ḥanafī law and Māturīdī dogma, it is unsurprising then that Qāḍīzādeli treatises and catechisms are permeated with both systems of religious thought.

Among published works on the Qāḍīzādelis, the most thorough study remains Zilfi's *Politics of Piety.* Now a classic within the field, this study is distinguished for being the first serious attempt to understand the inner workings of Qāḍīzādeli thought and activism; furthermore, it is set apart for its largely dispassionate approach. Her treatment of the Qāḍīzādeli movement is couched within a broader study of the Ottoman ᶜIlmiyye. There is no doubt that Zilfi's is a hugely important contribution to our understanding of the Ottoman learned institution during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the function and importance of the ᶜulamā' within it, the corruption that beset the hierarchy and the reasons for the ᶜIlmiyye's gradual deterioration. Her inclusion of the Qāḍīzādelis within the context of this study is clear: she sees them as a response to both ᶜIlmiyye corruption,

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[86] On the Ḥanafī use of these legal sources (*uṣūl*) to derive law, see H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence.*

social degeneration and political and economic crisis. But despite a very persuasive and detailed survey of the ᶜIlmiyye, Zilfi's treatment of the Qāḍīzādelis is over-reliant upon information supplied by the Ottoman chronicles of the seventeenth century. She too mistakenly interprets the Qāḍīzādelis as a movement opposed to Sufism and therefore distinct from the ᶜulamā' (though Zilfi does accept that some Qāḍīzādeli activists were from within the ᶜulamā' hierchachy). She also views the movement as an aberration in the course of Ottoman history, the existence of which is explained only by the specific conditions created by political, economic and perceived moral decadence afflicting Ottoman society. This is broadly accepted within the existing literature on the Qāḍīzādelis but more recently, as some scholars are beginning to challenge the claim that the seventeenth century marks the beginning of Ottoman decline, the whole question of whether the emergence of Qāḍīzādeli Islam is connected with a broader Ottoman crisis behoves revisiting.

An Ottoman Crisis?

The classical view in Ottoman historiography holds that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries mark the beginning of Ottoman decline.[87] Starting in the late-sixteenth century, political and economic upheaval in the empire resulted in the first major social and political unrest; at the same time, a perceived disintegration of morality held by religious sections of society resulted in the rise of religious extremism.[88] Many histories of the empire that survey its final demise are based on this model, none more popular than Bernard Lewis' *The Emergence of Modern Turkey.*[89] More recently, however, this

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[87] The seventeenth century is not only seen as a turbulent period in the Ottoman context; in fact, there is a body of scholarship on the global economic crisis of that century which was set in motion by population increases not matched by a commensurate level of food production. In this connection, there has been a long debate among historians about whether individual cases of crisis across the world can be seen as inter-connected, and, by extension, whether there is a possibility of formulating a general theory. The debate as to whether there was a general crisis in the 17th century began in 1954 in the journal *Past and Present,* which instigated a body of research in the subsequent two decades. Of significance are the papers collected in Trevor Aston (ed.), *Crisis in Europe, 1560-1660* (New York: Basic Books, 1965) and Geoffrey Parker and Lesley M. Smith (eds.), *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978). On the crisis in non-Western lands, see S.A.M. Adshead, 'The Seventeenth-Century General Crisis in China,' *France/Asie* 24 (1970), pp. 251-265; William S. Atwell, 'Ming Observers of Ming Decline: Some Chinese Views on the "Seventeenth-Century Crisis" in Comparative Perspective,' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1988), pp. 316-348; and Jack A. Goldstone, 'East and West in the Seventeenth Century: Political Crises in Stuart England, Ottoman Turkey, and Ming China,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 31 (1988), pp. 103-142. A different explanation for the connectedness of economic and political changes across the globe was given by Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System,* 3 vols. (New York: Academic Press, 1974). Work on the subject which began in earnest during the 1950s was halted within two decades, after the publication of a synthesis concluding bluntly that the research had not demonstrated the correctness of either position.

[88] The decline paradigm is summarised by Quataert as follows: 'Ottoman decline began in the late 16th century and continued until 1922, when the Ottoman Empire finally disappeared. While there were competent sultans and bureaucrats who occasionally struggled to right the ship of state, incompetence and backwardness prevailed. Thus, in the 17th century, incompetent, sex-crazed, or venal rulers were incapable of maintaining control. The disastrous defeat of the Ottoman army before the walls of Vienna in 1683 made the decline visible to all and the Empire subsequently staggered from one defeat to the next. Crowned with the title "The Sick Man of Europe," the Empire survived because of divisions among its enemies. In the 19th century, possible salvation appeared in the form of westernization, as Ottoman leaders sought to import military and administrative models from Europe. But the changes made were incomplete, both too few and too late. Ineptitude and retardation permitted nationalism to spread among the subject peoples; the imperial structure, thus unable to adjust, was torn apart from within. The last of the groups to gain national identity, the Turks, administered the final blow in 1922 and the Turkish Republic was born in 1923.' D. Quataert, 'Ottoman History Writing and Changing Attitudes: Towards the Notion of "Decline",' *History Compass,* 1 (2003), p. 4.

[89] Chapter II in Lewis' history, 'The Decline of the Ottoman Empire', is an example of his adoption of the classical declinist paradigm. See *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961). Another unmistakable example of interpreting Ottoman history through this same paradigm can be observed in N. Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 1980), esp. the chapter, 'Ottoman Consciousness'.

narrative is being contested by historians no longer convinced in the explanation provided by the decline paradigm. This is in part because of a growing scepticism regarding the objectivity of the first Ottoman observers who claimed the Empire was transitioning towards collapse, and in part because of a growing body of historical data extracted from Ottoman archives which belies the classical view.

The decline paradigm, which is thought to have extended through the final four centuries of the empire's existence, was first posited by members of the Ottoman elite who wrote nostalgically about the "good old days" of Süleymān I and the period immediately before him. They complained of institutional corruption, venality, and incompetence; their opinions were adopted by later Ottoman writers and chroniclers, whose views in turn were used by Turkish historians during the era of the early Turkish republic. More recently, the decline paradigm has been regurgitated by western Ottomanists.[90] Quataert, however, has shown that since the 1970s there has been an emerging body of literature that is more outward looking and more comfortably situated in global and comparative history, and which has begun to contest the decline paradigm. A key feature of this new body of understanding critical awareness regarding the observers of Ottoman decline predicated on the fact that they were very often not dispassionate observers but rather participants in partisan struggles—"disgruntled losers" who had 'failed to obtain the promotions and recognitions they felt they deserved'.[91] Perhaps understandably they

[90] D. Quataert, 'Ottoman History Writing', p. 1.

[91] D. Quataert, 'Ottoman History Writing', p. 3.

attributed their own failures to a system of promotion and recognition that had broken down and become corrupted.[92] Another feature of the new literature is that is considers Ottoman realities within the context of the Ottoman experience rather than measuring it against foreign models of change.[93] These studies depart considerably from the view that political and economic progression takes only one form, namely that experienced in Western nations.[94]

If taken seriously, the counter-narrative to the decline paradigm has implications for our understanding of the context in which the Qāḍīzādelis emerged, especially since much of the existing literature sets the Qāḍīzādeli rise against a backdrop of socio-political upheaval. Yet it is understandable that this narrative holds such currency, since a crisis is no doubt the perfect setting for the rise of puritanical religion, especially the sort espoused by the Qāḍīzādelis. And after all, crisis and upheaval have time and again been precursors to the emergence of puritanical or revivalist traditions. But aside from the contestation over whether the seventeenth century marks the beginning of Ottoman decline, and the ways in which this narrative has informed Qāḍīzādeli historiography, there are some important questions connected with the emergence of Qāḍīzādeli

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[92] D. Quataert, 'Ottoman History Writing', p. 3.

[93] See for example R. Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State, The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Albany, State University of New York, 1991); D. Howard, 'Ottoman historiography and the literature of "decline" in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,' *Journal of Asian History*, 22 (1), 1988, pp. 52–76; A. Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680, I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

[94] Examples of studies which have seen the West as the paradigm for development and modernisation include D. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: Chicago University, 1965); Rostow, W.W., *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: University Press, 1971). S.N. Eisenstadt, 'Multiple Modernities,' *Multiple Modernities,* 129 (2000), pp. 1-29, is an example of more recent scholarship which challenges the literature of the post-WWII decades.

reformism which warrant attention, and hold weight irrespective of whether the decline paradigm is accepted or not. Firstly, to overstate a causal relationship between the rise of the Qāḍīzādelis and the socio-political climate of the seventeenth century could be problematic given the fact that the roots of Ottoman puritanism are traceable back to Birgili in the middle of the sixteenth century, who wrote and preached during the period of Sultan Süleymān I (1520-1566). It is true that more violent forms of Qāḍīzādeli activism manifested in the latter half of the seventeenth century, but the intellectual cogs which were so vital to the development of their reformist agenda were set in motion in the so-called "golden-age" of Ottoman imperial history. Secondly, it was not only Meḥmed Qāḍīzāde and his successors who were openly critical of what they saw as the excesses of Sufi piety, state transgressions and general moral decline; in fact, we have evidence of ᶜIlmiyye ᶜulamā' also holding the same concerns and voicing their anxieties about non-Sharᶜī practices.[95] This runs counter to the view that the discontent of the Qāḍīzādelis was somehow unique to them in Ottoman society. Thirdly, the ethic of activism—or in the language of Islamic revivalism, *iṣlāḥ* and *tajdīd*—is firmly embedded within Muslim religious conscience, articulated most clearly in the discursive tradition of "enjoining good and forbidding evil". In Muslim legal thought this duty is considered an individual obligation (*farḍ ᶜayn*), especially when it has been abandoned by the majority

[95] In this regard, Kafadar says, 'Towards the end of his reign, Murād III (r. 1574-95), grandson of Suleymān the Magnificent, was haunted by occurrences which he read as signs of the corruption of his time. In 1594, for instance, Istanbul suffered a devastating fire, not an infrequent hazard of life in the city; but this time flames reached the gates of the palace whereupon Murād is reported to have said: "This occurrence in our vicinity is a sign for us!" And he is related to have shed blood-filled tears soon thereafter when one of the ships passing by the shore pavilion where the sultan was resting, blasted salutary cannon shots as was custom, which on that inauspicious occasion, shattered the glass windows of the kiosk as well as a piece of crystal right next to the sovereign'. See 'The Myth of the Golden Age', p. 37.

of Muslims. Since it is understood to be divinely mandated it is as likely to be invoked in times of stability as it might in times of crisis and upheaval. Anything deemed good by Muslims might become actively encouraged, even obligated in a legal sense, and anything deemed evil prevented, with physical force if necessary; both scenarios may be driven at the individual and group level. In a religious context such as this, interpreting puritanical movements such as the Qāḍīzādelis solely on the basis of the politics and social displacements of the period in which they arise can be misleading.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to provide a general introduction to the Qāḍīzādelis followed by a critical survey of the exisiting literature within the field of Ottoman Studies for the purposes of establishing the specific contribution to be made by the present study. From the survey of the literature it is clear that there is an important place for a close textual study of Qāḍīzādeli scholarship, which to all intents and purposes has been absent until now. Indeed only through such an endeavour will it be possible, once and for all, to move beyond constructions of the movement that ultimate caricature it. Even the best study to date, Zilfi's *Politics of Piety*, which serves as the most important foundation for the present study, is lacking in this respect.

Since a recurring trope within the current literature on Qāḍīzādeli Islam is the idea that the movement emerged due to specific social and political conditions which constituted

the onset of Ottoman decline, a discussion of this based on the recent literature that challenges the decline paradigm became unavoidable. It was suggested that historical accounts of the movement that uncritically accept the decline paradigm, or that over-emphasise the role played by the social and political conditions of the seventeenth century when telling the story about the Qāḍīzādeli emergence, risk overlooking the discursive continuities that link the Qāḍīzādelis with earlier puritanical trends, as well as ignoring significant factors beyond the political and social conditions of the seventeenth century that might have heralded this remarkable period in Ottoman history.

CHAPTER TWO: **THE THIRD MAN**

This chapter serves as an introduction to Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī's scholarship, highlighting the broader doctrinal and legal persuasions one confronts therein, and, most importantly in the context of the present study, introduces the key themes of his most significant legacy, *Majālis al-abrār.* That al-Āqḥiṣārī was one of a triumvirate alongside Meḥmed Birgili and Qāḍīzāde is largely unknown in scholarship to date despite the fact that manuscripts of his *Risāleh* were being circulating in from the late seventeenth century within Ottoman Turkey, bound in a single volume together with the *Risāleh*s of his ideological comrades. It is for this reason that Michot has referred to him as "the forgotten puritan" of Ottoman Islam. Furthermore, Michot has argued that, if reintroduced to the academic community, al-Āqḥiṣārī and his *Majālis* might do more than just reveal a new dimension to our understanding of religious life in seventeenth century Ottoman Turkey, they have also the potential to shed light on Islamic spirituality in other parts of the Muslim world, especially the Indian subcontinent.[96]

There remains a lacuna as far as information on al-Āqḥiṣārī's life is concerned which the most detailed textual study cannot remedy. In the absence of sources for his biography, there is little alternative but to undertake a historical reconstruction based on a textual archaeology of his *Majālis* and other works. The hazardous nature of such a task has been highlighted in the introduction, since we can know only what al-Āqḥiṣārī chooses to

[96] Michot, 'Kātib Çelebi's time: some views on the Ottoman society in the *Majālis al-abrār* of Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī.' (Unpublished paper delivered at ISAM, Istanbul, 2008).

disclose. Notwithstanding this, it is hoped that much is still to be gained from this endeavour.

From Cyprus to Āqḥisār

Despite the large number of works composed by Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī, and the high esteem with which his *Majālis al-abrār* was regarded, particularly within the 19th century Indian reform movement, we know surprisingly little about the life of this Anatolian scholar and reformer. Al-Āqḥiṣārī was born in Cyprus to a Christian family before being taken away as a child after the Ottoman conquest of the island between 977/1570 and 981/1573 and converted to Islam.[97] Initially sent to join the Devşirme for a religious education, he eventually went on to become a Ḥanafī scholar of some stature, gifted in Arabic as well as Ottoman Turkish. His works are indicative of a man at ease writing on a range of religious subjects, although philosophy in the specific sense of metaphysics is conspicuously absent from his corpus. This is explained by the fact that the age he lived in had experienced a dramatic shift away from the so-called rational sciences (*ᶜulūm ᶜaqliyya*) towards the revealed sciences (*ᶜulūm naqliyya*).[98] Al-Āqḥiṣārī probably spent most of the remainder of his life in Akhisar, Western Anatolia. Apart from these meagre details, we know little else about this Ottoman scholar.

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[97] Y. Michot, *L'opium et le cafe*, p. 54; M. Ṭāhir Bursalı, *Osmanlı müellifleri,* ed. A.F. Yavuz and İ. Özen, 3 vols. (Istanbul: Meral Yayınevi, 1975), vol. 1, p. 33.

[98] Kātib Çelebi laments this shift in his *Mīzān al-ḥaqq.* See in particular, pp. 25-26.

Michot has urged that al-Āqḥiṣārī be read within the reformist milieu of his time and puts forward three reasons to support his view. Firstly, al-Āqḥiṣārī's *oeuvre*, especially his writings on Sufism, clearly bears the mark of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) and, to a lesser extent, though no less significantly, Aḥmad b. Taymiyya (d. 728/1328). In this respect al-Āqḥiṣārī can be grouped with Birgili, Qāḍīzāde and other revivalists of the time who also drew from the scholarship of both student and teacher. Secondly, al-Āqḥiṣārī held Birgili Meḥmed Efendi, the spiritual father of the Ottoman revivalist movement, in particularly high regard. In his commentary of Birgili's *al-Durr al-yatīm fī l-tajwīd—The Unique Pearl, concerning the Recitation of the Qur'an,* he begins with the following invocation: '...The shaykh, the active and strong scholar (*al-ᶜālim al-ᶜāmil al-qawiyy*) Meḥmed b. Pīr ᶜAlī al-Birgili—may God make the Garden his refuge, give him to drink a pure beverage and quench his thirst...'[99] Thirdly, there is a strikingly large number of manuscripts in which the texts of Birgili's *Vasiyyet-Nāmeh,* the *Epistle—Risāleh* of Qāḍīzāde Meḥmed and al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Creed—Risāleh fī l-ᶜaqā'id* (also titled *Risāleh* and *Vasiyyet-Nāmeh*) are bound together almost like a sacred trilogy. This could indicate that, in the minds of many, the religious *Weltanschauungen* of these three scholars were seen as both convergent and of equal import.[100]

[99] Cited in Y. Michot, *Against Smoking,* p. 2.

[100] Y. Michot, *Against Smoking*, pp. 1-2. In MS. *Michot 0802,* al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Risāleh* appears between Birgili's and Qāḍīzāde's. Michot gives details of other manuscripts in which the three are bound together: Istanbul, *Yazma Bağişlar 6494*; *Laleli 2461, 2463, 2468, 2470, 2473, 2474, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2481* and 2482. See *Against Smoking,* p. 2.

The absence of biographical data on al-Āqḥiṣārī was of no great consequence to the 19th century Indian reform movement. Al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Majālis* was translated into Urdu and was considered as significant for the reformist agenda as Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*. The Urdu translation, *Nafā'is al-azhār,* of Muhammad Kifāyatullāh al-Dehlawī begins with a quote of Shāh ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz al-Dehlawī, famous son of Shāh Waliullāh, who says about al-Āqḥiṣārī's *magnum opus,* '*Majālis al-abrār* is a book which covers the science of exhortation (*waᶜẓ*) and admonition (*naṣīḥa*), and presents many benefits about the secrets of the Sharīᶜa prescriptions and about jurisprudence (*fiqh*), wayfaring (*sulūk*) and a refutation of evil innovations and customs. We do not know much about the author, other than what we may garner from his work. The author of this book is a scholar (*ᶜālim*), pious (*mutadayyin*) and god-fearing (*mutawarriᶜ*). He was master of the various religious sciences. How excellent is the statement of the one who said "Do not look at who is speaking, look at what is being said." This is since men are known by the truthfulness of their words; the truth is not known by the status of men.'[101] These are persuasive words, particularly in a context where there are no other sources to benefit from.

Al-Āqḥiṣārī's fundamental doctrinal affiliations are relatively easy to garner. Broadly aligned with the position of the Ottoman learned establishment, his doctrinal views on the attributes of God, the necessity of arriving at a rational basis for God's essential unicity (*tawḥīd*), and similar creedal questions betray a clear preference for the Māturīdī

[101] See Urdu translation of the *Majālis al-abrār,* Kifāyatullāh al-Dehlawī (Karachi: Dār Ishāᶜat), p. 36.

tradition.[102] The first three chapters of the *Majālis* make clear the importance of correct doctrine before embarking upon the spiritual path, and it is in each of these that he draws upon many of the classical *kalām*-theological arguments. His *Risāleh,* which is primarily focused on creed, also presents a palpably Māturīdī approach to doctrinal questions.[103]

Particularly interesting is the importance al-Āqḥiṣārī gives to the science of *kalām*. Here he is in keeping with both the orientation of the ᶜulamā' but also fellow Qāḍīzādelis, such as Birgili.[104] Aware of the criticism of *kalām* by some ᶜulamā' (he makes no mention of whom), al-Āqḥiṣārī puts forth a forceful apology in his *Risāla fī l-taqlīd.*[105] Correcting those who have taken an oppositional stance to *kalām* because of al-Shāfiᶜī's statement that the advocates of *kalām* should be whipped with palm branches (*jarīd*), al-Āqḥiṣārī points out that al-Shāfiᶜī meant by this only those theologians who had Muᶜtazilī leanings. Al-Āqḥiṣārī argues that the label *mutakallim* during al-Shāfiᶜī's time was not yet used to describe non-Muᶜtazilī theologians resulting in ambiguity, particularly for those unread in the history of theology. Not wishing to be confused as an apologist for the Muᶜtazila, al-Āqḥiṣārī articulates the orthodox position—that the Muᶜtazila were indeed

[102] On Māturīdī doctrine, see M. Çeric, *Roots of Synthetic Theology in Islam: A Study of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1995).

[103] The theological texts taught on the Ottoman madrasa curriculum were both Māturīdī and Ashᶜarī. The primary books taught in *kalām* were the *Sharḥ al-ᶜaqā'id* of al-Taftazānī (d. 793/1390) and *Sharḥ al-maqāṣid* and *Sharḥ al-mawāqif* of Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1423). For more on the influence of the Ashᶜarī school on Ottoman science and thought, see *Change and Essence: Dialectical Relations between Change and Continuity in the Turkish Intellectual Tradition,* edited by S. Gunduz and C.S. Yaran (Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change Series IIA, Volume 18, Washington D.C.: 2005). For more on the Ottoman madrasa curriculum, see F. Robinson, 'Ottoman-Safavids-Mughals: Shared Knowledge and Connective Systems', *Journal of Islamic Studies,* 8 (1997), pp. 151-184.

[104] See for example Birgili's *Vassiyetname,* in *The Path of Muhammad,* translated by T. Bayrak (Canada: World Wisdom, 2005), pp. 3-4.

[105] Al-Āqḥiṣārī, *Risāla fī l-taqlīd,* MS *Harput 429,* fols. 29r-37r.

heretics who employed *kalām* arguments to support their heresies; they therefore deserved to be punished, not by palm branches, as suggested by al-Shāfiᶜī, but iron rods. For our Ottoman revivalist, the title "People of *Kalām*" is not the preserve of the Muᶜtazila and when used to describe the shaykhs of *Ahl al-Sunna*—Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ashᶜarī, Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarā'inī, the Qāḍī Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī and Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī are all examples al-Āqḥiṣārī cites—it takes on an altogether more positive hue. How could the situation be otherwise when these imāms 'established proofs [in support] of God and His Prophet, were the auxiliaries of the religion and did more to curb Muᶜtazila heresies than simply distributing punishments with iron rod or palm branches.' Furthermore, 'these men destroyed the heresies of the Muᶜtazila through conclusive arguments'.[106]

In the second session of the *Majālis,* al-Āqḥiṣārī very explicit about how he sees the epistemic value of *kalām* within Muslim thought:

> The path to the knowing God, the Exalted, is arrived via two routes: the first is the route of the People of Reason and Argumentation (*Ahl al-naẓar wa l-istidlāl*); the second is the route of the People of Spiritual Exercise and Exertion (*Ahl al-riyāḍa wa l-mujāhada*). As for those travelling on the route of the People of Reason and Argumentation, when they hold to a religion (*milla*) from the religions of the Prophets then they are [to be considered] dialecticians (*mutakallimūn*). If not, then they are [to be considered] peripatetic philosophers (*ḥukamā' mashshā'ūn)*—a group from among the philosophers who have chosen the method of Aristotle in discourse (*baḥth*) and demonstration (*burhān*). [These latter] are not from the people of religion. As for those travelling on the path of *riyāḍa* and *mujāhada*, if their spiritual exertion is in agreement with the Sharīᶜa*,* then they are [to be

[106] Al-Āqḥiṣārī, *Risāla fī l-taqlīd*, fols. 34v-35r.

> considered] law-abiding Sufis (*al-Ṣūfiyyat al-mutasharri*ᶜ*ūn*); if not, then they are [to be considered] illuminationist philosophers (*ḥukamā' ishtirāqiyyūn*), a group from among the philosophers who have chosen the method of Plato vis-à-vis intuition (*kashf*) and contemplation (ᶜ*iyān*). They too are not from the people of religion.
>
> This said, each path is made up of two groups. Those believers (*al-mu'minūn*) who know God (*al-*ᶜ*ārifūn bi-llāh*), are only two from these groups: the first are People of Reason and Argumentation and the second are the People of Witness and Contemplation (*Ahl al-Mushāhada wa l-*ᶜ*iyān*). This is since, if their knowledge of Him, the Exalted, is arrived at by way of argumentation with rational proofs (*dalīl* ᶜ*aqlī*) and revealed proofs (*dalīl naqlī*), then they are from the people of external knowledge and demonstration (*ahl al-*ᶜ*ilm al-ẓāhir wa l-burhān*). If, however, their knowledge of Him, the Exalted, is arrived at by way of witnessing with inner-sight (ᶜ*ayn al-baṣīra*), then they are from the people of internal knowledge and contemplation. The attainment (*ḥāṣil*) of the first path is the perfection of speculative power (*quwwa naẓariyya*), and ascension through its levels. The attainment of the second path is the perfection of practical power (*quwwa* ᶜ*amaliyya*) and ascension through its levels. This is the real miracle (*karāma ḥaqīqiyya*) which manifests at the hands of the Friends of God (*awliyā' Allāh*).[107]

Kalām is therefore considered one of the two authentic and acceptable paths to gnosis according to al-Āqḥiṣārī. Elsewhere in the *Majālis,* he speaks about the need for the science of *kalām* to 'establish and defend the correct creed (*al-i*ᶜ*tiqād al-ṣaḥīḥ*), distinguishing it from heretical beliefs'.[108] Though he concedes that someone who has "arrived" at a belief in God through blind faith (*taqlīd*) can be considered a believer (*mu'min*), he warns that failure to learn the proofs of the *mutakallimūn* formulated to

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[107] *Majlis II,* f. 6v-7r.

[108] On the Ashᶜarī-Māturīdī emphasis on the need for grounding belief in God's existence on rational proofs, see A. Shihadeh, "The existence of God," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology,* edited by T. Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 197-217.

prove the validity of set dogmata (*masā'il iᶜtiqādiyya*) is a sin.[109] More radical than this, al-Āqḥiṣārī says, '[Such a person] is left to the will of God: if He wishes, he will forgive him and enter him into Heaven without punishment; and if He wishes, He will punish him in a measure commensurate with the sin, after which He will cause him to enter Heaven.'[110]

Throughout *Majālis al-abrār* al-Āqḥiṣārī provides *kalām*-based arguments for, *inter alia*, the existence of God and creation *ex nihilo*, in a manner that is repetitive—a didactic method common in texts of this kind. These figure mostly in the early sessions that deal with theological questions.[111] It is not difficult to infer as we read through these early sessions that al-Āqḥiṣārī views *kalām* as a vital component of the religious sciences, an essential pillar of theology, and a tool which he will deploy time and again to support his theological claims.

On questions relating to jurisprudence, al-Āqḥiṣārī cites many of the best-known Ḥanafī jurisprudential treatises, commentaries and glosses, such as *al-Hidāya* of Burhān al-Dīn

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[109] *Majlis VI,* f. 19r. Elsewhere al-Āqḥiṣārī takes the view that success or failure on the spiritual path is contingent on observance of the law and on learning the essential doctrines as formulated by the *mutakallimūn*. 'It is necessary that the worshipper who is compos mentis occupies himself with the formula [*lā ilāha illallāh*] so that his heart finds contentment, and so that he prepares [to receive] knowledge of God, the Exalted. Before occupying himself [with this formula], it is incumbent that he learns of the science of *kalām* that which will straighten creed, in accordance with the People of the *Sunna* and the Communion (*Ahl al-Sunna wa l-Jamāᶜa*), such that he can vouchsafe himself from the uncertainty of the heretics. The heart, as long as it is muddied by the darkness of doctrinal heresy, will not be enlightened by the lamps of pious action.' See *Majlis I,* f. 3v.

[110] al-Āqḥiṣārī, *Risāla fī l-taqlīd*, f. 35r.

[111] See especially *Majlis III* through to *XI.*

al-Marghinānī ($6^{th}/12^{th}$ c.)[112] and the *Ikhtiyār* of ᶜAbd Allāh b. Maḥmūd b. Mawdūd al-Mawṣilī (d. 683/1284)[113] Sporadically, he cites the positions of other schools but this is when he wishes to highlight the agreement between other schools and his own on the legal opinions in question, or because he disagrees with the position adopted by the Ḥanafī school. But it is on the question of religious innovation, *bidᶜa,* that al-Āqḥiṣārī makes his most striking use of foreign schools, drawing in particular from the works of Ibn Taymiyya, Ḥanbalī jurist, and Ibn al-Ḥājj and al-Ṭurṭūshī, two representatives of the Mālikī school.

In terms of writing, al-Āqḥiṣārī penned a number of texts and epistles, many of which exist only as manuscripts in library archives. The majority are of no more than five folios in length, and treat various issues in the areas of ritual practice, dogma and particular social customs that had some bearing on religious practice and belief. Below is a list of these. It is clear that his interests closely corresponded to the interests and concerns of Birgili, Qāḍīzāde and other revivalists; the list also provides an indication as to why the study of al-Āqḥiṣārī could be important for our understanding of the reform movement in 16^{th} and seventeenth century Ottoman Turkey:

Risāla fī l-bidᶜat al-sayyi'a wa ghayr al-sayyi'a—Epistle on pernicious and non-pernicious innovations (The same epistle is held in the Sülemaniye library bearing the

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[112] See for example *Majlis XLVII*, f. 128r-v and *Majlis LXXX,* f. 221r-v.

[113] See for example *Majlis LXIX,* f. 186v.

title *Risāla fî dhamm al-bid^c^a—Epistle on the censure of innovation*).[114] This epistle highlights the harms of innovation in religious practice, drawing at length from Ibn Taymiyya's *Iqtidā' ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm.* It is virtually identical to *Majlis XVIII.*

Risāla fî bayān kull min ṣalāt al-raghā'ib wa ṣalāt al-barāt—Epistle making clear [the status of] the prayers of Raghā'ib and Barāt.[115]

Risāla fî man^c^ al-taṣliya wa l-tarḍiya wa l-ta'mīn waqt al-khuṭba—Epistle on the interdiction to ask for God's blessings on the Prophet and for His satisfaction with the Companions, as well as to say "Amen", during the Friday sermon.[116]

Risāla fī anna l-muṣāfaḥa ba^c^da l-ṣalawāt al-khamsa bid^c^a makrūha—Epistle explaining that shaking hands after the five prayers is a detestable innovation.[117] The epistle deals with a subject popular among Qāḍīzādeli activists. Al-Āqḥiṣārī goes to some length to explain why the interdiction of this social exchange is necessary. He claims that it is considered a duty (*wājib*) by most people to the extent that if one does not turn to shake the hand of his neighbour in the prayer it is a rebukable act in the

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[114] MSS. *Dārülmesnevi 258,* ff. 105v-110v (1093/1682); *Harput 429,* ff. 158r-164v; *Reşid Efendi 985*, ff. 83r-86r. Yazmalar: Manisha *İHK*, 45 Hk 2937/2, ff. 21v-27r.

[115] MSS. *Dārülmesnevi 258,* ff. 91v-99r; *Harput 429,* ff. 148r-157v; *Reisülküttab 1182,* ff. 123v-127r; *Reşid Efendi 985*, ff. 77v-83r. Yazmalar: Manisha *İHK*, 45 Hk 2937/3, ff. 27v-36r.

[116] MSS. *Harput 429,* ff. 77v-84v; *Kiliç Paşa 1035,* ff. 69v-70r; *Reşid Efendi 985*, ff. 87v-92r; *Reisülküttab 1182,* ff. 57v-64r; *Şehid Ali Paşa 1189,* ff. 98r-104r . Yazmalar: Manisha *İHK*, *Akhisar Zeynelzade Koleksiyon,* 45 Ak Ze 5998/2, ff. 20v-29r (1310/1891).

[117] MSS. *Harput 429,* ff. 72r-73r; *Reisülküttab 1182,* ff. 64v-65r. See also *Esad Efendi 3599,* ff. 218v-237v. ; *Şehid Ali Paşa 1189,* ff. 98r-104r . Yazmalar: Manisha *İHK*, *Akhisar Zeynelzade Koleksiyon,* 45 Ak Ze 5998/2, ff. 20v-29r (1310/1891).

eyes of the people. Al-Āqḥiṣārī also claims that it was a practice of the Shīᶜa and so should be abandoned to avoid imitating a misguided group. The epistle constitutes the main part of *Majlis L.*

Risāla fī ḥurmat al-raqṣ wa l-dawarān—Epistle on the prohibition of dancing and whirling.[118] Al-Āqḥiṣārī anathematises those who consider dancing permissible: 'The one who deems dancing permissible is a disbeliever (*mustaḥill al-raqṣ kāfir*). In support of this, he claims the existence of a juristic consensus on the issue. He cites Mālik, al-Shāfiᶜī, Aḥmad and other authorities in order to further strengthen his claim. At one point, he says only people deficient in intelligence dance and that it is 'not even befitting of women and children.' Among the proofs furnished in support of its prohibition is that the one dancing 'resembles an ape' and 'he mixes worship with jest'.

Risāla fī l-radd ᶜalā l-maqābiriyya—Epistle refuting the visitors of tombs. Also listed as *Radd al-Qabariyya—Refutation of the visitors of tombs*.[119] This epistle begins with the following statement of gratitude to Ibn al-Qayyim: 'These pages I have taken from *Ighāthat al-lahafān fī makā'id al-Shayṭān* of the Shaykh, Imām and ᶜAllāma Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya—may God place his soul among the souls which have returned to their Lord pleasing (*rāḍiya*) and pleased (*marḍiyya*)—which he wrote for some of

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[118] MS. *Harput 429,* ff. 65r-72r. See also *Hafid Efendi 453,* ff. 79r-85r.

[119] MSS. *Fatih 5398,* ff. 71r-86v; *Hafid Efendi 453,* ff. 90r-117v; *Harput 429,* ff. 100r-118v; *Kiliç Ali Paşa 1035,* ff. 49v-68r. Yazmalar: Manisa, *İHK,* 45 Hk 2937/1, ff. 3v-20v.

his companions. I have appended some of what I have found in other authoritative books because there are many people in these times that have made some graves into places of idolatry.' The epistle draws heavily from the *Ighātha*, particularly in its chronology of grave-worship and idolatry and when setting out the rationale underpinning the prohibition. The epistle is identical to *Majlis LVII*.

Risāla fī ḥukm al-dukhān—Epistle on the [legal] status of tobacco smoking. This is also listed as *Risāleh dukhāniyyeh—Epistle on tobacco*.[120]The text is essentially a fatwa that argues a case for the prohibition of tobacco. Citing Galen and Avicenna as medical authorities, al-Marghinānī among other Ḥanafī jurists, and drawing heavily from al-Lāqānī's epistle on the same subject, it is a carefully crafted, systematic exposition of the harms of tobacco.

Majālis al-abrār is al-Āqḥiṣārī's *magnum opus* and subsumes many of the subjects and interests one finds in the shorter epistles. Michot suggests that al-Āqḥiṣārī recycles material from the *Dukhāniyye* and, via a table of correspondences, is able to show that *Majlis XCVI and XCVII* are essentially both abridgements of his fatwa against tobacco. I too have found other places in the text where material is identical, and apparently recycled, which further reinforces the usefulness of studying al-Āqḥiṣārī's ideas through

[120] MSS. *Dārülmesnevi 258,* ff. 70v-74v; *Harput 429,* ff. 194r-199v; *Kiliç Ali Paşa 1035,* ff. 31v-36v; *Reisülküttab 1182,* ff. 52v-57r. See also the extract copied in MS. *Giresun 114* (28 Hk 3587/7), p. 27: *Maṭlab fī ḥaqq al-dukhān—Inquiry concerning tobacco*. Yazmalar: Manisha *İHK*, *Akhisar Zeynelzade Koleksiyon,* 45 Ak Ze 1602/1, ff. 1v-6r; *İHK,* 45 Hk 2937/5, ff. 43r-47v. This bibliography, together with other works of al-Āqḥiṣārī, are in *Against Smoking,* pp. 7-8 and Y. Michot, *L'opium et le Cafe,* p. 55, n.1.

the *Majālis.* The utility in al-Āqḥiṣārī's habit of recycling his material is that the ascription of corresponding texts to their author is reinforced.

By virtue of Michot's study of the *Dukhāniyye* a fairly accurate dating of the *Majālis* is possible. Michot discovers that the *Dukhāniyye* draws heavily from *Kitāb naṣīḥat al-ikhwān bi-ijtināb al-dukhān—The Book Recommending to the Brothers to Keep Away from Tobacco,* a treatise authored by the Mālikī shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Lāqānī (d. 1041/1631). Both the *Dukhāniyye* and the *Majālis*, with assemblies *XCVI* and *XCVII*, were authored sometime between 1025/1616, the date of the composition of the *Naṣīḥa* in Cairo, and the year that al-Āqḥiṣārī passed away, i.e. 1041/1631 or 1043/1634. Michot points out that the implications of this are that the *Dukhāniyye* and the *Majālis* were thus composed during the years immediately preceding, or corresponding to, the imperial ban on tobacco proclaimed by Murād IV after the great fire of Istanbul in 1043/1633.[121]*Majālis al-abrār* was surely al-Āqḥiṣārī's most significant scholarly contribution, supported by the fact that the Süleymaniye Library alone holds over forty hand-written copies.[122] Though commanding the focus of this study, there will be occasions when other epistles of al-Āqḥiṣārī are referred to, typically for elucidation of discussions in the *Majālis* or in order to expand on relevant aspects of his thought which is not possible through a reading of the *Majālis.*

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[121] *Against Smoking,* pp. 34-35. See p. 30ff for the table of correspondences establishing the recycling of parts of the *Dukhāniyye* within the *Majālis.*

[122] For a description of these manuscripts, see Y, Michot, *L'opium et le cafe* (Paris-Beirut: Albouraq, 2008), pp. 56-61.

Before taking up a discussion on the *Majālis*' themes, it is worth considering the intended audience. Michot is probably right when he suggests that, 'the pious rigorist admonitions of the *Majālis* are not primarily intended for a prince or a ruler but, rather, for the *petit bourgeois* milieu of Ottoman bazaaris, ulema and civil servants'.[123] This, however, requires qualification. The *Majālis* is composed in Arabic, in a style which is loquacious and very repetitive. It is replete with jargon, demanding of its reader a familiarity with theology, jurisprudence, Sufism and *kalām*. With this in mind, though the ultimate audience is most probably the *petit bourgeois*, al-Āqḥiṣārī must have expected that the content will be modulated by an expert in such a way as to benefit the audience.

For the semonist, each *Majlis* serves to provide a structure for the Friday sermon (*khuṭbat al-jumu*ᶜ*a*) or for a study circle (*ḥalaqa*). The repetition of material, which might indicate that the *Majālis* is primarily for composed for didactic purposes, is excused by al-Āqḥiṣārī in the introduction, suggesting that he also anticipated that the text would be read as a monograph. The fact that each chapter is an individual unit of the whole is also indicative of this.

As for choice of title, the concept *majlis* had currency in Ottoman society within Sufi circles especially, and was used to describe sessions of both *samā*ᶜ and

[123] Y. Michot, *Against Smoking,* p. 12.

dhikr.[124] Assemblies organised for trivial pursuits, such as using tobacco and opium, were also referred to *majālis*. Could it be that al-Āqḥiṣārī hoped to spark the interest of those who organised *majālis* for impious purposes—that they might lend an ear to a reading of *Majālis al-abrār*? It is more likely that al-Āqḥiṣārī wanted to contrast sermons based on readings of his book with sermons of the arrogant sermonists, whom he refers to in *Majlis LXXXII* where he accuses them of organising "assemblies of the impious".[125] Another possibility is that al-Āqḥiṣārī was hoping to appeal to *ḥadīth* scholars, for who the concept of *majlis* connoted a gathering for the reading aloud of traditions of the Prophet. Certainly his choice of *Maṣābīh al-sunna* as the source of traditions for the *Majālis* would have aimed to secure both the interest of *ḥadīth* scholars and also madrasa teachers, for whom the *Maṣābīh al-sunna* was an important text among the *ḥadīth* collections taught on the Ottoman curriculum.[126]

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[124] See F. Robinson, 'Madjlis', *EI*[2] for a general survey of the term in each of its social and political usages. See also R. Sellheim, 'Samā^c', *EI*[2].

[125] *Majlis LXXXII,* f. 226v.

[126] On the *Maṣābīḥ al-sunna* see F. Robinson, 'Ottomans-Safavids-Mughals', p. 176.

The hundred topics covered in the *Majālis* are:

1. *Dhikr Allāh*	52. The obligation of praying as prescribed
2. Eminence of *dhikr*	53. The five daily prayers and expiation
3. Eminence of faith	54. The eminence of collective prayer
4. Love of the Prophet	55. Funeral prayer
5. Faith in his teachings	56. Saying *Lā ilāha illāllāh* and Paradise
6. Tasting the savour of faith	57. The visitation of tombs
7. Faith in the Prophet	58. Remembering death and getting ready for it
8. Obeying and disobeying the Prophet	59. The plague and prophylaxis
9. Following the Prophet	60. Patience in case of plague
10. *Mu'min*, *muslim*, *mujāhid*…	61. The eminence of patience and disasters
11. The best *dhikr* and invocations	62. On the *ḥadīth* "Collect five things…"
12. The intercession of the Prophet	63. The calling of servants to account
13. *Ikhlāṣ al-tawḥīd*	64. Calling oneself to account before death
14. The faith that will save	65. Inviting the *umma* to repent now
15. *Fiṭrat al-islām*	66. On the *ḥadīth* "God accepts the repentance…"
16. The various kinds of *kufr*	67. The intelligent and the foolish
17. The prohibition of praying near tombs	68. *Taqwā* and good character
18. The various kinds of innovations	69. Licit earnings
19. *Raghā'ib* and other innovated supererogatory prayers	70. The prohibition of monopolies
20. *Faḍā'il al- ḥajj* and its innovations	71. The fates of traders in the hereafter
21. *Faḍā'il al-zakat* and forsaking it	72. Trading, truthfulness and trustfulness
22. *Faḍā'il al-ṣawm*	73. The true nature of usury
23. Eminence of fasting in Sha^cbān	74. Forward buying *(salam)* and other contracts
24. *Laylat al-barā'a*: *sunna* and innovations	75. Begging
25. The sighting of the Ramaḍān new moon	76. The rights of slaves
26. Ramaḍān	77. The prohibition of homosexuality
27. Intention, fasting, breaking the fast	78. The prohibition of drinking wine
28. *Tarāwīḥ* prayers	79. The prohibition of cheating *(fulūl)*
29. Delaying the prayer and breaking the fast	80. The appearing of troubles *(fitna)*
30. Expiation for breaking the fast	81. Judges, bribes and false testimonies
31. Ramḍān retreat and *Laylat al-Qadr*	82. Who should be appointed preacher
32. *Ṣadaqat al-fiṭr*, the two feasts and their innovations	83. The renewers of the religion, every century
33. Fasting in Shawwāl	84. Eminence of being the first greeting another

34. The ten first days of Dhū l-Ḥijja	85. Turning away from a Muslim brother for more
35. The sacrifice than three days	86. The prohibition of low opinion and spying
36. Muḥarram and ᶜĀshūrā’ fasting	87. Frequenting perverts and eating with them
37. ᶜĀshūrā’: traditions and innovations	88. The best action: loving and hating for God
38. Curing the sick	89. Following the Prophet’s commands and
39. *Ayra* and *fāl*, blameworthy and sunnī	90. The preeminence of God’s mercy
40. Brotherhood in this world’s affairs and prohibitions	91. “Satan circulates in man like his blood”
41. Disasters, repentance and invocations	92. Being tempted is not punished
42. Repelling disasters with invocations	93. Satan and the angel are close to man
43. Praying in case of fright	94. Islam started as something foreign
44. Prayers for the solar and lunar eclipses	95. The grace of good health
45. Praying for rain	96. Not entering the mosque if smelling bad
46. Learning the prescriptions and Qur’an	97. Forsaking what one should not be interested in
47. Psalmody of the Qur’an	98. Recommendation concerning women
48. The call to prayer	99. On the *ḥadīth* “Ask for advice of women…”
49. The eminence of Friday	100. Women’s obligations towards their husbands
50. Shaking hands	
51. The obligation of prayer	

The contents reveal the scope of the *Majālis*—al-Āqḥiṣārī clearly intended to cover the major questions of Islamic theology, law and mysticism being discussed in his time.

Al-Āqḥiṣārī’s Sources

The choice of authorities quoted by al-Āqḥiṣārī betrays his doctrinal leanings and exhibits the dimensions of his reformist agenda, particularly his critique of specific Sufi practices

such as the visitation of graves for the purposes of intercession. The preamble to the *Majālis* provides us with a clear statement of intent:

> This text (*maktūb*) [that has been] penned is an explanation of some of the great *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan ḥadīth*s contained in the book *Maṣābīḥ* [...] I have compiled it for some brothers and have appended to it what I have found [to be relevant] from the authoritative books (*al-kutub al-mu*ᶜ*tabara*) in the [sciences of] *tafsīr* (exegesis), *ḥadīth, fiqh* (jurisprudence), *kalām* (dialectical theology) and *taṣawwuf* (Sufism). I will make clear the correct doctrines (*i*ᶜ*tiqādāt ṣaḥīḥa*) and the actions of the Hereafter (*a*ᶜ*māl al-ākhira*) and I will warn against (*uḥarriẓẓu*) seeking assistance from the graves (*istimdād al-qubūr*) and other [such actions] which are done by the disbelievers (*kafara*) and the people of innovation, who are misled and misleading sinners (*ahl al-bida*ᶜ *al-ḍāllat al-muḍillat al-fajara*). This is because I have seen many people in these times that have made some graves into sites of idolatry—they pray at them and offer sacrifices there. These folk perform deeds and utter statements unbecoming of the people of faith (*ahl al-īmān*). Therefore, I want to make clear what the Law (*shar*ᶜ) has brought in this regard, so that truth will be differentiated from falsehood.[127]

Clearly the *ḥadīth* tradition is an important source for the *Majālis,* but in his preamble al-Āqḥiṣārī is not explicit about the basis for his selection from the *Maṣābīh al-sunna*. It is likely that his selection was determined by utility, so those *ḥadīth*s that could be instrumentalised for his stated intention of 'making clear what the Law has brought' in matters relating to customary practice, and correcting the practices of "the people of innovation". There are also other books of tradition which al-Āqḥiṣārī draws from; he certainly does not limit himself to traditions in the *Maṣābīḥ* and there are ample references to the Qur'an throughout also. The Qur'an and *ḥadīth* are the two most frequently cited authorities, no doubt to provide strength to his own doctrinal and legal

[127] *Majālis,* f. 1r.

positions. The Qur'anic references are often accompanied by explanations based on classical tafsīr—Ibn ᶜAbbās, Mujāhid and Ḍaḥḥak are among the early commentators cited frequently. His invoking of names associated with the *Salaf,* those early Muslims whose views were considered by Sunnīs to be virtually unchallengeable, was long before al-Āqḥiṣārī time a strategy used to strengthen one's own doctrines. It is possible that in al-Āqḥiṣārī's case, it was a strategy adapted from the writings of scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim, which we will see in the following chapters were specific influences upon his the *Majālis*. Certainly al-Āqḥiṣārī seems to cite names of the earlier generations of Muslim than of any other time.

In his jurisprudential outlook al-Āqḥiṣārī has a clear bias for the Ḥanafī school. He cites several of the most authoritative jurisprudential texts of the time: the commentary on the *Majmaᶜ al-baḥrayn* of Firişhti-Oğlu (known as Ibn Malak), Abū Bakr al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣāṣ when he discusses the rites of the *ḥajj*, Qāḍīkhān's *Fatāwā*, Imām Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Sattār al-Kardarīᶜs (d. 642/1244) *al-Fatāwā al-Bazzāziyya*, and the most distinguished of legal manuals on the madrasa curriculum of the age, *al-Hidāya,* al-Marghinānī's commentary on al-Qudūrī's *Bidāyat al-mubtadī,* together with Ibn Humām's commentary. It is primarily when engaging with discussions that fall within the ambit of legal theory that al-Āqḥiṣārī ventures beyond the Ḥanafī school, and it is here that he can

be found citing al-Ṭurṭūshī, Abū Shāma, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim.[128] These two latter authorities, both representatives of the Ḥanbalī school, are used extensively, more so than any other non-scriptural authority cited by al-Āqḥiṣārī. One finds especially when discussing the visitation of graves, prayer besides graves and the heresies of specific Sufis, that al-Āqḥiṣārī marshals their arguments, particularly those of Ibn al-Qayyim. Here al-Āqḥiṣārī is in keeping with the tradition of Birgili, who was probably the first to introduce a Ḥanbalī critique to an otherwise Ḥanafī milieu. His reliance on the Qur'an, *ḥadīth,* early authorities and later Ḥanbalī scholars betrays a broader attempt to recalibrate religion on the "Muḥammadan Path"—a model first articulated in Ottoman times by Birgili.

Conclusion

Despite the lack of source material on al-Āqḥiṣārī's personal life, it is not difficult to elicit from the *Majālis* his fundamental legal and theological views. Most significantly for the present study, we can elicit from the text's intellectual concerns and its citations of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim that the *Majālis* fits neatly within the Qāḍīzādeli corpus of activist manuals. Yet there is much which is yet to be garnered from a closer textual reading of the *Majālis*. This is the primary undertaking of the chapters that follow.

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128 Sanūsī on *kalām* (f. 18v); al-Qushayrī's *Tabḥīr* (f. 23r); Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Tafsīr* (f. 24r); Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'* (f. 25r) and *Ayyuha l-walad* (f. 25v); al-Qurṭubī's *Tadhkira* (f. 32v); Ibn al-Qayyim's *Ighātha* (f. 50v; 51v-r, 138r; 158v); al-Ṭurṭūshī (f. 52v; 73r on Barā'at); *Majma*ᶜ *al-baḥrayn* (f. 60v); Firişte-Oğlu (Ibn Malak), *Sharḥ majma*ᶜ *al-baḥrayn* (f. 60v); Abū Bakr al-Rāzī for a fatwa on the *ḥajj* (f. 64v); Abu l-Qāsim al-Ṣafādī (f. 64v); Abū Layth (f. 65r) on the *ḥajj*; Qāḍīkhān's *Fatāwā* (f. 86r); Ibn Sīnā (f. 85v); Galen (f. 85v) both on Tobacco; Imām al-Kardarī, Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Sattār (d. 642), *al-Fatāwā al-Bazzāziyya* (f. 108v); Abū Shāma (f. 158v).

CHAPTER THREE: **THE MUHAMMADAN PATH**

A reconstruction of Aḥmad al-Āqḥiṣārī's conceptualisation of the spiritual path is no easy task since he does not explicitly refer to any of the popular late-medieval Sufi orders. So while he has a considerable amount to say about the subject in *Majālis al-abrār*, and even dedicates a smaller epistle to this bearing the title *Risāla fī-l-sulūk*, only a close reading of these texts with the purpose of examining the constituent elements of his spiritual vision will allow the positioning of his outlook within the broader Muslim spiritual tradition. The work done in this chapter will reveal that al-Āqḥiṣārī in fact benefitted significantly from a spiritual order which had firm roots in Turkey—the Naqshbandiyya. Furthermore, this chapter lays to rest the dispute over al-Āqḥiṣārī's possible associations with the Khalwatī order while at the same time establishes the centrality of the mystical path within his religious *Weltanschauung.*

The Naqshbandī Paradigm

There are several pertinent reasons why a study of *Majālis al-abrār* should commence with an attempt to position al-Āqḥiṣārī within the broader mystical landscape of the Ottoman seventeenth century. Firstly, the opening chapters of his *Majālis* treat issues which fall under the general scope of *taṣawwuf*. The first *Majlis*, for example, is on the remembrance of God (*dhikr Allāh*)*,* and both describes the merit of the act and the correct method with which to undertake it. Subsequent assemblies also emphasise *dhikr* and

discuss the benefits of its performance—gnosis (*ma^{c}rifa*), miracles (*karāmāt*) and sainthood (*wilāya*). Simultaneously, there are lengthy discussions on deviancy, both in matters of belief and practice. Secondly, it is the stated aim of al-Āqḥiṣārī to 'make clear the correct beliefs (*i^{c}tiqādāt ṣaḥīḥa*) and the works of the Hereafter (*a^{c}māl al-ākhira*), and to warn against seeking aid from graves and other practices of the disbelievers (*kafara*) and heretics (*ahl al-bida^{c}*)'.[129] This raises the question, what notion of orthodoxy and orthopraxy does he have in mind? In pointing out correct beliefs and practices, is he in fact advocating a specific school of law or mystical order? These are questions which deserve attention. Their responses will effectively contextualise the ideational dimension of al-Āqḥiṣārī's thought, the specific type of proselytisation he was engaged as well as contextualise to some extent the invective one confronts in the *Majālis.* Treatment of these issues at the outset will facilitate the contextualisation of subsidiary discussions that al-Āqḥiṣārī engages—discussions which would otherwise appear arbitrary and disconnected.

There are lengthy condemnations in the *Majālis* of several religious practices which had widespread currency in Ottoman Turkey, particularly amongst the more libertarian Sufi orders. We know that al-Āqḥiṣārī is opposed to any act of ritual worship which has not explicitly been sanctioned by the Prophet himself—he is opposed, *inter alia*, to extra-scriptural prayers that are performed in congregation, psalmody of the Qur'an, shaking hands after prayer and singing and dancing. Later in this study, where some of these

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[129] *Majālis al-abrār,* f. 1r.

issues are examined more closely, it will be seen that al-Āqḫiṣārī no less rigorist than other contributors to the anti-*bid^{c}a* literature who preceded him. For two matters in particular, however, al-Āqḫiṣārī reserved his most venomous opposition—both were of specific relevance to Sufis. The first was mystical revelation (*kashf*), which was considered the fruit of rigorous spiritual exercise (*mujāhada*); the second was the veneration of graves (*ta^{c}ẓīm al-qubūr*), especially, though not exclusively, with the intention of seeking intercession from their occupants. In such places, al-Āqḫiṣārī tends to move from a generalised critique to a specific attack, identifying the Sufis he has in mind through their associated practices. We know about Qāḍīzādeli antagonism towards the Bayrāmīs, the Mawlawīs and antinomianism in all of its varieties. We are also familiar with Qāḍīzādeli antagonism for the Khalwatīs. Al-Āqḫiṣārī critique in these sessions, particularly when he makes references to "the people of retreat" (*aṣḥāb al-khalwa*), seems to fit very neatly within this broader Qāḍīzādeli pattern.

Whereas Qāḍīzādeli opposition to Sufi practices has invariably been understood as the movement's absolute rejection of Sufism—Ahmet Yaşar Ocak's description of them as 'le seul movement antisoufi au vrai sens du mot dans l'histoire ottoman' is a typical example of this[130]—a reading of al-Āqḫiṣārī leaves no room for doubt that his criticism was of an

[130] A. Ocak, 'Oppositions au soufisme dans l'Empire ottoman aux quinzième et seizième siècles,' in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics,* edited by F. De Jong and B. Radtke (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p. 610. Zilfi should be included here, as well as other mentioned in the survey of literature. These scholars have perhaps been led to this by the fact that the movement would go to quite extreme lengths to stop practices it deemed heretical; it is indeed difficult to reconcile how such extremism could be associated with a Sufi movement.

intra-Sufi kind.[131] Indeed in *Majālis al-abrār* and other works, al-Āqḥiṣārī writes unambiguously about the centrality of the mystical path in his understanding of Islam; there is no doubt that it forms a key part of his religious program. Yet at the same time, al-Āqḥiṣārī is never explicit about whether he was an affiliate himself of a specific order. There is no mention of an *isnād*, a *silsila*, any well-known *Mashāyikh* to indicate any preference for a specific order; neither is there mention of any Sufi orders by name.[132] One is left only to speculate therefore on what model of Sufism he envisaged. This said, there is a rather striking resemblance between the model he puts forward, especially in *Risālat al-murshid wa l-murīd,* and the methodology of the Naqshbandī order. There is much more to be said about this, but before commencing any further, the broader dynamics of Naqshbandī piety must be outlined. If indeed al-Āqḥiṣārī was benefitting in some way from Naqshbandī Sufism, a survey of the key doctrines and practices, particularly those by which the order differentiated itself from its competitors, and a subsequent assessment of these in light of al-Āqḥiṣārī's own agenda for spiritual reform, becomes important.

The Naqshbandīs derive their name from Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband (d. 791/1389), the epithet of the fourteenth-century master of the order, Muḥammad al-Uwaysī al-

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[131] Examples of intra-Sufi criticism in the history of Islam abound. See for example J. Van Ess, 'Sufism and its opponents: reflections on topoi, tribulations, and transformations,' in *Islamic Mysticism,* pp. 22-44.

[132] Even the Khalwatīs, who receive the brunt of al-Āqḥiṣārī's invective in the *Majālis*, are only indirectly referred to as *aṣḥāb al-khalwa.*

Bukhārī.[133]Weismann explains that a combination of the Persian words *naqsh* (imprint) and *band* (seal) form to mean that the divine name of God is fixed in the heart.[134] As had been the case with other Sufi fraternities, guilds of law and schools of theology, it was the disciples of Bahā' al-Dīn who would establish the founding principles of the path and then invoke the name of the master as a source of legitimisation.[135]

The order is considered to have passed through various phases in its history, each distinguishable by certain changes in emphases marked by powerful personalities connected with it.[136] Hourani presents them as follows: from Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (d. 11/633 or 12/634) to Abū Yazīd Tayfūr al-Bistāmī (d. 263/877 or 264/878), Naqshbandīs call it the 'Ṣiddīqiyya'; from Abū Yazīd to ᶜAbd al-Khāliq al-Ghujdawānī (d. 561/1166) the 'Tayfūriyya'; from al-Ghujdawānī to Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband the 'Khojagawaniyya'; from Naqshband to Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624) 'The Naqshbandiyya'; from Sirhindī to Khālid al-Baghdādī (d. 1242/1827) the 'Mujaddidiyya'; and from Khālid onwards the 'Khālidiyya'.[137] Despite new changes in direction under the impact of its masters over time, there would continue to exist essential attributes of the order in terms both of its broader doctrinal outlook and its distinct attitude towards the Sharī'a. Two markers of Naqshbandī piety that set it apart from most

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133 I. Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya: Orthodoxy and Activism in a Worldwide Sufi Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 14

134 I. Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya,* p. 14.

135 I. Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya,* p. 14.

136 A. Hourani, 'Sufism and Modern Islam: Mawlana Khalid and the Naqshbandi Order', in *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (University of California Press*,* 1980), p. 79.

137 Hourani, 'Sufism and Modern Islam', p. 79.

other mystic orders were sobriety (*sukūn*) against intoxication (*sukr*), and scripturalism against mystical intuition. Explaining these markers, Le Gall says:

> Doctrinally, the Naqshbandīs did not view their fidelity to the *Sharī^{c}a* as a public or political commitment, but rather understood it to entail sobriety in devotional practice and personal observance of religious duties [...] The tarīqa literature illustrates an orthodoxy construed in a rather specific way. What is meant in the Naqshbandi manuals by observance of the *Sharī^{c}a* is in fact the notion of adopting the rigidity (*al-akhdh bi-l-^{c}azīma*) as opposed to taking legal dispensations (*al-^{c}amal bi'l-rukhsa*). [...] the *^{c}amal bi'l-^{c}azīma* was viewed as constraining behaviour rather than mystical journeying or doctrine. It was framed as a matter of individual observance of sharī^{c}a duties such as prayer and especially ritual purity more than a summons to sharī^{c}a-abidance in the larger society. And it was thought to be embodied especially in the Naqshbandi devotional regimen, with silent dhikr at its core.[138]

The Naqshbandīs differentiated themselves from competing orders in several other ways. One of these was to project back their initiatic chain, or *silsila,* not as was customary for almost all Sufi orders to the Prophet via his cousin and son-in-law ^{c}Alī (d. 40/661), but rather to the Prophet via Abū Bakr, close companion of the Prophet and first caliph of

[138] D. Le Gall, 'Forgotten Naqshbandis and the Culture of Pre-modern Sufi Brotherhoods,' in *Studia Islamica,* 97 (2003), pp. 87-119, esp. pp. 92-93.

Islam.[139] Abū Bakr was seen as an emblem of piety and conservativism, and also as one of the staunchest advocates of the Sharīᶜa from among the Prophet's companions; a spiritual linkage to him would reflect the broader commitment of the Naqshbandīs of bringing mystical practice in line with the Qur'an and *Sunna*.

The conservativism of the Naqshbandī order is explained by its seventeenth century grand-master, Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī, known as Imām Rabbānī.[140] According to him, the distinctive features of the Naqshbandī way, in particular its strict adherence to the *Sunna,* are most clearly expressed in its avoidance of musical sessions (*samāᶜ*), mystical dancing (*raqṣ*) and *dhikr* with loud voice; its eschewal of excessively austere practices and severe exercises; its observance of moderation in food, drink, sleep and dress; its disparaging of ecstasy (*wajd*), visions (*mushāhadāt*) and illuminations (*tajalliyāt*); its censuring of boastful claims and ecstatic statements (*shaṭaḥāt*); and its subjection of mystical revelations (*makshūfāt*) to the doctrines of the Law.[141] Sirhindī insisted that the

[139] H. Algar, 'The Naqshbandi Order: A Preliminary Survey of Its History and Significance,' in *Studia Islamica,* 44 (1976), pp. 123-152 (p. 126). Algar further explains that for those who believe in the retrospectivity of the *isnād* tradition, the Naqshbandī association with Abū Bakr becomes interesting for political reasons: firstly, it immediately positions the Naqshbandīs in contradistinction to other Sunnī Sufi orders, who typically trace their lineage through ᶜAlī; secondly, and more fundamentally, from the doctrinal perspective, it places them in opposition to the Shīᶜa, who were perennially viewed as enemies by the Naqshbandīs. Algar argues that, notwithstanding the obvious political implications of the connection back to Abū Bakr, there are other more pertinent reasons to consider when thinking about why the Naqshbandīs would prefer to project their order as having its source in a notable companion such as Abū Bakr. Says Algar, 'The Naqshbandīs have always prided themselves that their path is that of the Companions of the Prophet, with nothing added or subtracted—theirs is a path which shuns all forms of innovation and which adheres strictly to the Sharīᶜa for spiritual realisation. The austerity, conservativism and largely uncontroversial life of Abū Bakr reflect those qualities which the Naqshbandīs were zealously advocating.' For more on this, see Algar, 'The Naqshabandi Order', pp. 123-152, esp. p. 126ff; See also Le Gall, pp. 107-108.

[140] On his life and works see Y. Friedmann, *Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); I. Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, pp. 55-67; and A. Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), pp. 90-95.

[141] M.A. Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah: A Study of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's Effort to Reform Sufism* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1986), p. 17.

goal of the Naqshbandī path is neither union with God, nor participation in His attributes, but simply to obey the Sharīᶜa and to be a faithful servant of God. For him, there is no stage higher than the stage of servanthood (*ᶜabdiyāt*).[142] Sirhindī was thus an ardent advocate of Sharīᶜa-faithfulness, and his project of synthesising the Sharīᶜa and *Ḥaqīqa* left an indelible mark upon Naqshbandī piety in posterity.

At the level of practice, a key marker of the Naqshbandīs, separating them from virtually all other Sufi brotherhoods, was their adoption of the silent *dhikr,* something which they claimed was inherited from Abū Bakr. Algar tells the story of the origins of the silent *dhikr*, said to date back to the point of the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina in the year 633:

> The transmission of the dhikr took place during the hijra when the Prophet and Abu Bakr were together in the cave: Abu Bakr faced the Prophet, his breast turned towards him, sitting on his heels with his hands placed on his knees and his eyes closed. The Prophet then silently enunciated the form of the dhikr- *lā ilāha illa'llāh* - three times, and was followed by Abu Bakr. This transmission of the dhikr signified the beginning of the *silsila* that was ultimately to acquire the designation Naqshbandi, and also furnished the archetype for all subsequent initiation into the *silsila*. Initiation is essentially the transmission of the dhikr, from the most recent link in the initiatic chain to the new disciple.[143]

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[142] M.A. Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah*, p. 17. In his *Maktūbāt,* Sirhindī says: 'The object of man's creation is to worship and obey God as He has ordained; and the object of worship and obedience is to achieve conviction (*yaqīn*) which is the essence of faith [...] The object of *fanā'* and *baqā'* which are the essence of *wilāyat,* is to acquire this conviction, and nothing else'. Cited in Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah,* pp. 176-177.

[143] H. Algar, 'The Naqshbandi Order', p. 129. Le Gall notes that for the Naqshbandīs, slent *dhikr* went beyond simply reciting the formula *1ā ilāha illa Allah Muḥammad rasūl Allāh* in the heart in a way that was inaudible. It was meant to be 'an individual, interiorized, and continuous technique that one performed at all times and while engaged in a myriad of activities. Ideally it was to become a "natural disposition" (*malaka*), which even the reciter's heart would cease to sense, so as to become oblivious to anything that was not God, including the very act of remembrance.' See 'Forgotten Naqshbandis', p. 94.

The Naqshbandīs generally hold that silent *dhikr* is more meritorious than audible *dhikr*. In the history of the order, some shaykhs moved beyond disapproval of the audible *dhikr* to complete interdiction. The author of the *Tuḥfat al-ṭālibīn* is one who proclaimed that it was of 'no benefit'; this opinion was shared by Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī.[144]

The most important principles of the Naqshbandī way are set out in *Kalimāt-i qudsiyya—The Sacred Words,* of the eighth master of the order, ᶜAbd al-Khāliq al-Ghujduwānī. They betray the rather distinct approach of the order towards mystical wayfaring. The work outlines eight principles of the path which aim at governing the doctrinal and ritual methodology of the Naqshbandīs.[145] Two points in particular are striking, and will certainly shed further light on the kind of activism-orientated Sufism which we encounter in relation to al-Āqḥiṣārī. These are:

1) *Khelvet dār anjumān*—solitude within society: this proceeds from the recognition that seclusion from society for the purpose of devotion may paradoxically lead to

[144] See D. Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism:* Naqshbandī*s in the Ottoman world, 1450-1700* (Suny Press, 2006), p. 116. For Sirhindī's view, see *Al-Maktūbāt al-rabbāniyya* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ᶜilmiyya, 2004), 1: 440.

[145] The eight principles are categorised into two groups of four: The first includes *bāz gasht, yād kard, yād dāsht*, and *nigāh dāsht.* The second group comprises *hūsh dar dam, naẓar bar qadam, safar dar waṭan*, and *khalwat dar anjuman.* For the translations of these, with explanations, see Th. Zarcone, 'Khawādjagan', *EI²*. The first group described are said to be shared with all other Sufi orders. The second set of principles, however, are what set the Naqshbandīs apart. *Safar dar watan* and *khalwat dar anjuman* are explained in the body of this study. The second two principles of group two, *hūsh dar dam* and *nazar bar qadam*— awareness in breathing and keeping watch on the steps—allude to an Indian influence, according to Weismann. He quotes Khani, who explains them as the means to keep the heart from distraction when, respectively, the breath enters the body and the eyes look at the world. See Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya,* p. 28.

an exaltation of the ego, which is more effectively effaced through a certain mode of existence, and activity within society; inspired by devotion to God.

2) *Safar dār vatan*—journeying within the homeland: this principle establishes the importance of the disciple undertaking his spiritual journey within the boundaries of his homeland, rather than seek to migrate from it in the hope of attaining spiritual realisation whilst on his travels.[146]

Both of these principles characterise a marked shift from the customary demand of many Sufi orders upon the disciple to retreat into isolation and also to migrate from his homeland in the pursuit of a shaykh and/or spiritual ascension. They also highlight the clear aim of the Naqshbandī Order, namely the achievement of personal spiritual reform by direct involvement within the life of the community. These principles aid in explaining

[146] Algar explains this further: 'The outward journey through the world, it is true, may serve as a mirror and support for inward wayfaring, but it too is liable to defeat its own purpose, and become an end in itself. Hence the Naqshbandis have emphasized the inward journey, the journey in the homeland that is man's own inner world and the receptacle of God's grace'. See 'The Naqshbandi Order", p. 134. Sirhindī, in his *Maktūbāt,* says about this principle, 'Travelling within one's homeland is from the firmly established principles of the great masters of the Naqshbandī path, may God sanctify their secret. This order derives a certain experience from such a journey, for it allows for the final stages of the path to be enjoyed very early on'. See *Maktūbāt,* 1: 194. Elsewhere, Sirhindī says it is an essential characteristic of man that he is in need of social interaction, to be in communion with people of his own kind; he is civil (*madanī*) in nature and this is the will of God. This is part of man's perfection, since it is a characteristic endowed by God himself. It follows that a person should be accepting of this part of his nature; if he attempts to deny it within himself, believing that he can dispense with social interaction altogether, he not only proceeds against his own nature, he further risks becoming arrogant. This also connects back to the importance of remaining within one's homeland. On this, see *Maktūbāt,* 2: 482-483. Weismann says of the two principles – travelling in the home and solitude in the crowd – that they are 'the most consequential in terms of their contribution to the social and political evolution of the Naqshbandīs'. He further says, 'the principle of *safar dar watan* and *khalwat dar anjuman* could be interpreted as encouraging the Naqshbandīs to be involved in the world as part of their mystical vocation'. See I. Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya,* p. 28.

the frequent association of the Naqshbandī Order with social reform and political activism.[147]

The *rābiṭa* is the last of the spiritual practices of Naqshbandī Sufism which will be surveyed here, once more because of the way in which the Naqshbandīs have used it as a marker of difference, as well as the relevance it has for the present study's aim of locating al-Āqḥiṣārī's outlook on Sufism.

Naqshbandīs have long held that their own order is pre-eminently superior to other orders. According to Netton, 'Their arrogance is matched only by their fierce orthodoxy and desire to adhere to the Sharīᶜa as a fundamental ethos'.[148] One of the keys to understanding this self-confidence is to appreciate the centrality of the *rābiṭa* in the Naqshbandī path. Le Gall has suggested that this method 'became prized only among

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[147] Algar charts the evolution of the Naqshbandīs from a relatively undifferentiated mystical order into a politically and socially active movement that gained a firm foothold in both the religious and political spheres. The process was particularly influenced by Khwāja Naṣir al-Dīn ᶜUbaydallāh Aḥrār (d. 895/1490). Algar explains that for Ahrār, his political activity which aimed at securing the welfare of the Muslims and the supremacy of the Sharīᶜa became a *maqām,* a station on the mystical path. It was a 'vision that has continued to dominate Naqshbandi political activity down to the present, and being in itself a mode of devotion, it by no means contradicts the inward cultivation of spirituality but complements it'. See 'The Naqshbandi Order', pp. 137-138.

[148] I. Netton, *Sufi Ritual: The Parallel Universe* (Surrey: Curzon, 1999), p. 61. In the *Maktūbāt,* Sirhindī wrote to various acquaintances pointing out why he believed the Naqshbandī path was the greatest (*aᶜẓam*) of all the mystical orders. He argued, amongst other things, that the Naqshbandī path was unique in its principles of *safar dār waṭan* and *khalwat dār anjumān* which afford the disciple speedy results. In all, throughout the *Maktūbāt,* there are at least ten letters written to different acquaintances in which Sirhindī claims the superiority of the Naqshbandīs over all other orders. The Naqshbandī shaykh, Nazim al-Qubrusi, is apparently no less confident: 'The Most Distinguished Naqshbandi Order surpasses others in its ability to educate our souls in...[the] highest and very fine aspects of Islamic teaching [*sic*] ... the Naqshbandi Order teaches the very highest good manners, manners which make its followers lovely to their Lord and to all good people ... the Naqshbandi Order originated in the heart of the Prophet, and its authority was passed down through Abu Bakr from one Master to the next in an unbroken chain of succession reaching into our time. Since Abu Bakr, among all the Prophet's companions, was the only one to receive the full inner truth of the Prophet's heart, the Naqshbandi Order inherits the fullest and finest of those Prophetic teachings ... The 'Naqsh' [design, 'tattoo'] of the heart is Allah. Whoever wants that 'Naqsh' on his heart will come to the Naqshbandi way. *It is the highest way in all religions ... The highest of all religions is Islam and the highest level in Islam is the Naqshbandi order.*' Cited in Netton, *Sufi Ritual: the Parallel Universe,* p. 61.

nineteenth-century Khālidīs, and that until then it had been viewed with suspicion, primarily because its casting of the shaykh as so utterly indispensable to the mystical quest created potential for abuse.' She continues, 'Early Ottoman Naqshbandīs seemed to celebrate the *rābiṭa* as a pillar of their devotional regimen, and some went as far as to call it the most superior or "closest" of all spiritual techniques'.[149] Literally meaning "binding", *rābiṭa* refers to the technique of keeping the image of the master in the heart, whether he is present or absent. On the part of the master, he is required to reciprocate by turning his heart towards the disciple, referred to as *tawajjuh* (literally, orienting). Hereby, a bond of love is created.

Weismann suggests that, at a practical level, the *rābiṭa* allowed charismatic masters to increase their influence over the disciples and to expand the sphere of their spiritual authority, while leaving them time for other pursuits.[150] Whilst such analyses are indeed useful, the view of the Naqshbandīs has long been to see the *rābiṭa* as a key instrument for achieving extinction (*fanā'*) in the divine. Since extinction in God is deemed to be the final stage of spiritual ascendency—and therefore the most difficult stage of wayfaring—the Naqshbandīs developed a tripartite system whereby the disciple annihilates himself first in his shaykh (*fanā' fi-l-shaykh*), then in the Prophet (*fanā' fi-l-rasūl*), and then finally in God. The first two stages both facilitate progress towards the end goal, but also,

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[149] D. Le Gall, 'Forgotten Naqshbandis', p. 95.

[150] I. Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya,* p. 29.

mean that the shaykh remains involved in the disciple's wayfaring. The shaykh acts as a bridge to the divine.[151]

According to Le Gall, the *rābiṭa* was used by Naqshbandīs as a substitute for ascetic exercises, *mujāhadāt*, such as supererogatory fasting, night vigils and ritual seclusion; these were derided by them just as they were derided by the legists, since they were not scripturally sanctioned.[152] She further explains that, more generally, the *rābiṭa* was conceived as sharing the sober, interiorised, and continuous character of the silent *dhikr* and the *murāqaba*.[153] In all, the *rābiṭa* was another key differentiator of Naqshbandī practice, one which would place them yet again in opposition to other Sufi orders who had devotional practices which were incompatible with the Sharīᶜa.

This much for Naqshbandī doctrine and praxis. The history of the Naqshbandī order in Ottoman lands, especially up until the 16th century, has been well-studied. There is a body of literature on the key shaykhs of the order and the nature of its political involvement in the affairs of the state. Much of it points towards a mystical order which was able to embed itself within Turkish society and establish a good deal of respect from within the

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[151] For more on the concept of *fanā' fi-l-shaykh, fanā' fi-l-rasūl* and *fanā' fi-llāh,* see J. Ter Haar, 'The Spiritual Guide in the Naqshbandi Order,' in *The Heritage of Sufism,* Vol. II, edited by L. Lewisohn, p. 320. Le Gall says, 'In several ways the *rābiṭa* represented the epitome or apex of two staples of the Naqshbandī claim to superiority, the *suḥba*, "intimate companionship" between shaykh and disciple, and the *irshād* or close guidance through which the shaykh led his disciples on a transformative process of advancing toward mystical union. It is in this context that some Naqshbandis described the *rābiṭa* as enabling shaykhs to lead their disciples to "witnessing" in the shortest time.' See 'Forgotten Naqshbandis', pp. 97-98.

[152] Le Gall, 'Forgotten Naqshbandis', p. 95.

[153] Le Gall, 'Forgotten Naqshbandis', p. 95.

ᶜIlmiyye and from the authorities. Explaining the place the order secured for itself following its first introduction into Ottoman lands in the 15th century, Algar says:

> The order has played a role of cardinal importance in the spiritual and religious life of the Turkish people. Sober and rigorous, devoted to the cultivation of God's Law and the exemplary model of the Companions, it was above all the order of the ulama: countless members of the learned institution gave it their allegiance. But men from all classes and professions have been affiliated to it, and its influence has extended beyond the major cities into provincial towns and villages as well. It can be said that after Transoxiana, Turkey became the second major center of the Naqshbandiya, and today, after the passage of Central Asia under Russian control, it is the most important area of Naqshbandi concentration, with the possible exception of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent.[154]

Yet given the relative paucity of research on the political and social involvement of the Naqshbandīs in Ottoman Turkey from approximately the second half of the 16th century through to the seventeenth century, one might be forgiven for wondering whether the Naqshbandīs had recoiled into some sort of protracted *khalwa.* This is since they all but disappeared off the radar of history until their dramatic reappearance which manifested in the Mujaddadī-Khālidī line. Had the order simply become eclipsed by competing orders, such as the Khalwatīs, who had made determined in-roads into the ᶜIlmiyye?[155] Or had the Naqshbandīs converged into the ranks of the Qāḍīzādelis, such as the case of Osmān Bosnevī, a Naqshbandī shaykh who adopted Qāḍīzādeli rhetoric as a way of emphasising

[154] Algar, 'The Naqshbandi Order', pp. 140-141.

[155] On the Khalwatī attempts at conciliation with the juristic community see B.G. Martin, 'The Khalwati Order of Dervishes'.

Naqshbandī superiority and “a tool in the competitive struggle among tariqas”?[156] These are only speculations until we learn more about the role of the Ottoman Naqshbandīs in the seventeenth century.

Good Sufi, Bad Sufi

Aḥmad al-Āqḥiṣārī clearly holds the mystical path as central in the life of a believer. In fact, the very first *ḥadīth* in the *Majālis,* which he cites from the *Maṣābīh al-Sunna* of the Shāfiᶜī exegete and traditionist al-Baghawī, is one which underscores the importance of the remembrance of God *dhikrAllāh*. The opening passages betray the extent to which spirituality infuses al-Āqḥiṣārī's religious horizon. He appears both prescriptive and critical, and his positions on a series of practices which were commonplace in the Sufi tradition are striking. *Majlis I* commences with the following *ḥadīth*:

> [The Prophet], upon him be peace, likened the one who remembers [his Lord] to a person who is alive, since what is intended by 'the one who is alive' is one who possesses true, everlasting life. This is achieved only by the remembrance of God, since remembrance (*dhikr*) grants life to the hearts of those who meditate and necessarily prepares them for [receiving] the knowledge of the Lord of the Worlds and arrival to eternal life in the Land of Bliss. He who is bereft of *dhikr* is like one who is dead since he is bereft of that which gives life to his heart and that which necessarily prepares him for knowledge and eternal life. This is since the honour of man and the excellence by which he surpasses other creatures occurs only by [his] preparedness for [receiving] the knowledge of God, the Exalted. [This is] achieved by his heart rather than by one of his limbs [...] He will only find

[156] We know from Le Gall that Osmān Bosnevī, a Naqshbandī who became embroiled in the Qāḍīzādeli affair, probably adopted their rhetoric as 'a way of emphasising the Naqshbandī devotional probity and superiority and a tool in the competitive struggle among tariqas.' See 'Forgotten Sufis', p. 98. There is an interesting question as to whether Bosnevī was an anomaly or part of a broader trend.

> contentment in the remembrance of God, the Exalted. This is just as God the Exalted says: 'Truly in the remembrance of God do hearts find contentment.'[157]

Al-Āqḥiṣārī method in every *majlis* is to begin with a cursory examination of the opening *ḥadīth* before proceeding with a detailed dissection in which he discusses it in relation to issues of his age. With respect to the *ḥadīth* above, he then explains the way in which *dhikr* is to be performed, the prerequisites of *dhikr* and the consequences of prolonged meditation:

> And the best [form of] remembrance (*dhikr*) according to that which has been reported in this *ḥadīth* is [the repetition of], 'There is no god but God (*lā ilāha illallāh*)'. It is necessary that the worshipper who is *compos mentis* (*mukallaf*) occupies himself with this formula so that his heart finds contentment (*yaṭma'inna qalbu-hu*) and so that he prepares himself for [receiving] knowledge (*ma*ᶜ*rifa*) of God the Exalted.[158]

Al-Āqḥiṣārī presents the corner-stone of Sufi epistemology—the nexus between *dhikr* and gnosis, *ma*ᶜ*rifa,* the latter of which is a central pursuit of the mystical path. Here is also the tacit acknowledgment of the superiority of the inner (*bāṭin*) over the outer (*ẓāhir*), that is of the spiritual over the material. How, then, is *dhikr* to be performed? Al-Āqḥiṣārī provides us with two insights in *Majlis II*:

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[157] *Majlis I,* f. 3r. The verse with which the excerpts ends is Q.13.28.

[158] *Majlis I*, f. 3r.

> The remembrance (*dhikr*) of God is the pre-eminent demand (*al-maṭlūb al-a*ᶜ*lā*) and the furthest objective (*al-maqṣūd al-aqṣā*). It is of two types: the first is *dhikr* with the tongue and the other is *dhikr* with the heart. *Dhikr* with the tongue is that which is uttered on the tongue and heard by the ears; it consists of sounds and letters. As for *dhikr* with the heart, it is neither uttered on the tongue nor heard by the ears; rather, it is the contemplation and observance of the heart; it is the highest ranking [form of] *dhikr* and it near certain that this [is the form of dhikr] intended by here, i.e. the contemplative, internalized *dhikr*. This is since this is the [form] which has additional excellence over and above expending wealth and self, as has come in the report: 'An hour's contemplation is better than seventy years of worship.' This is not achieved except by the servant's persistence in *dhikr* with the tongue together with a presence of heart until the point at which the *dhikr* becomes firmly embedded in his heart and takes control of him in such a manner that, were he to shift his attention away from it, it would be a burden for him, just as at the beginning [of his spiritual quest] it was a burden for him to become constant in doing it.[159]

The two texts translated above—the first of which underlines the excellence of making *dhikr* using the formula, *lā ilāha illallāh,* and the setting out al-Āqḥiṣārī's preference for the internalised or silent method (*dhikr al-khafī*)—bear a striking resemblance to the Naqshbandī prescription of silent *dhikr*. That the silent meditation with the formula *lā ilāha illallāh* is characteristically Naqshbandī is clear; the discussion of this above noted that this particular method was considered by Naqshbandīs and others to have the authority of the Prophet, connected back to him via Abū Bakr. Yet there remains in al-Āqḥiṣārī's position some ambiguity: it is uncertain in the second of the two translations whether he is an opponent of the audible *dhikr*. Certainly implicit in what he says is that a novice has permission to vocalise his incantation until the point at which he is able to master the internalised form, *dhikr bi-l-qalb.* This said, does al-Āqḥiṣārī take the view

[159] *Majlis II*, f. 6v-r.

that the audible *dhikr, al-dhikr al-jahrī*, is permissible absolutely? It would be a mistake to draw this conclusion since in his *Risāla fī dhikr al-lisān wa l-al-qalb* al-Āqḥiṣārī writes in much less ambiguous terms. Here he says that the audible *dhikr* is prohibited (*ḥarām*), and to engage in it is to commit a sin since it is an action which has no root in the practice of the Prophet or the Companions.[160] The permission he grants to the novice is therefore contextualized—it is simply a transitional step allowed purely on the grounds of necessity.

In the *Risāla fī dhikr,* al-Āqḥiṣārī explains that, apart from those actions for which loud *dhikr* is obligated—such as when one utters the testimony of faith, which must be done loudly at least once in a lifetime, when making the call to prayer (*adhān*)*,* the *takbīr*s of the Eid prayer, and a handful of similar instances—the *Sunna* insists both women and men perform *dhikr* with an inaudible tone (*al-ikhfā'*). He cites several verses of the Qur'an and various *ḥadīth*s to support his claim, among them, 'And remember your Lord in your soul, with humility and in reverence, without loudness in words, in the morning and evenings; and be not of those who are unheedful' (Q.7.205). He then says, 'God has [in this verse] commanded one to perform the *dhikr* and supplication (*du*ᶜ*ā*) silently; to make these audible is proscribed since the command (*al-amr*) to undertake one action is at once the prohibition (*al-nahy*) of its opposite. The thing which has been prohibited is

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[160] *Risāla fī dhikr al-lisān was l-qalb—Epistle on the remembrance of God by the tongue and by the heart,* MSS. *Darülmesnevi 258,* ff. 99v-104r; *Harput 429,* ff. 49v-55v; *Şehid Ali Paşa 1189,* ff. 88v-94r. See also *Risāla fī l-dhikr—Epistle on the remembrance of God,* in MS. *Harput 429,* ff. 85v-93r. Yazmalar: Çorum, *Hasan Paşa IHK,* 19 Hk 797/4, ff. 8v-12r; Manisa, *IHK,* 45 Hk 2224/10, ff. 82r-93r; 45 Hk 2937/4, ff. 36v-42r.

ḥarām and to undertake a *ḥarām* action is a sin (*ma*ᶜ*ṣiya*).'[161] Now the Naqshbandī insistence upon silent *dhikr* has already been noted so the question as to whether al-Āqḥiṣārī's position conforms to the Naqshbandī attitude could be thrown into doubt. We know that early modern masters of the Naqshbandī path could be very uncompromising about audible *dhikr*.[162] Does al-Āqḥiṣārī's leniency for the novice conflict with this? Despite a possible tension, al-Āqḥiṣārī can still be considered to be conforming to a distinctly Naqshbandī attitude since the Naqshbandī position has never been monolithic when it comes to the question of audible *dhikr*. After Baha'uddīn Naqshband, though the silent *dhikr* did become the dominant practice among Naqshbandīs, this did not prevent practical disagreements among successive Naqshbandī masters on what attitude should be taken vis-à-vis the audible *dhikr*. Weismann explains that the debate started as early as Baha'uddīn's learned disciples, Muḥammad Parsa and Yaᶜqūb Charkhi. Parsa accommodated the audible *dhikr* whilst affording greater preference for the "elevated" silent method. He described it, just as al-Āqḥiṣārī does above, appropriate for beginners who should aim to internalise it when they advance further along the mystical path. On the other hand, Parsa stressed that the audible *dhikr* must not be performed as a means to gain fame or material benefits, as perhaps was sometimes customary. Charkhi took a radical approach, rejecting the audible *dhikr* altogether. He claimed that Baha'uddīn

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[161] *Risāla fī dhikr* (MS *Harput 429*), f. 49v.

[162] Sirhindī is a good example. He says in very harsh terms, 'I have been asked how it is that I forbid *dhikr* with a loud voice and condemn it as an innovation (*bid*ᶜ*a*), but do not condemn many other things which had not existed at the time of the Prophet […] the acts of the Prophet were of two kinds: those that were performed as ᶜ*ibāda,* an act of worship, and those that were done as ᶜ*urf* and ᶜ*āda,* habits and customs. The acts which were done as ᶜ*ibāda,* we consider deviations from them to be evil innovations […] But the acts which were done as part of habit and custom, we do not regard deviations from them as innovation, and do not proscribe them. For they do not belong to religion (*dīn*); their existence or disappearance depends upon the custom of society rather than religion'. Cited in M.A. Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah,* pp. 22-23. See also *Maktūbāt,* Vol. I, 232, p. 440.

proscribed it and that it had no basis in the Qur'an and the *Sunna.* This position was to receive the sanction of his influential disciple Aḥrār.[163] Of course it is unknown to what extent al-Āqḥiṣārī was aware of the Parsaic approach to *dhikr*.

Al-Āqḥiṣārī moves next to highlight his concerns about those frauds on the mystical path who, despite their charlatanism, are able to achieve certain states which Sufis traditionally claim for themselves. These states are routinely the outcome of prolonged *dhikr* and spiritual exercise (*mujāhada*). The Sufis believe that sustained *dhikr* leads to the removal of barriers (*ḥijāb*) between the spiritual aspirant and the Divine. This makes possible mystical revelation, known in Sufi parlance as *kashf.* Schimmel notes that some Sufis have classified the different kinds of revelation according to the different levels of consciousness on which they occur and whether they lead to intellectual or intuitive knowledge of the Divine.[164] Although there are variances among Sufis in their approach to treating the subject of *kashf,* there is consensus among them that this is a key mode of acquiring divine knowledge. Schimmel says, '[Sufis] all clearly distinguished the *ᶜilm ladunnī,* the "wisdom that is with and from God" and is granted to the gnostic by an act

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[163] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya,* p. 27.

[164] For these classifications, Schimmel uses Khwāja Mīr Dard's, *ᶜIlm al-kitāb: 1) kashf kawnī* is revelation at the level of created things, which stems from righteous actions and purification of the lower soul; it is located in dreams and clairvoyance; *2) kashf ilāhī,* divine revelation, is a fruit of continued worship and purification of the heart; it results in the knowledge of the world of spirits and in cardiognosy ("soul reading") such that the mystic has access to the unseen and to hidden thoughts; *3) kashf ᶜaqlī,* revelation by reason, is the lowest level of intuitive knowledge, attained by purifying the moral faculties; *4) kashf imānī,* revelation through faith, is the fruit of perfect faith. See *Mystical Dimensions in Islam,* pp. 192-193.

of divine grace, from normal knowledge.'[165]This mode of knowledge has, according to Sufis, solid foundations in the story of Moses and Khiḍr, which appears in Qur'an XIV.[166]

The spiritual aspirant is thought to experience various degrees of *kashf* as he ascends the stations of spiritual realisation. But this is not the only reward on the spiritual path. Accompanying divine knowledge (*maᶜrifa*), as a bi-product of the purgatorial-meditational process, is the ability to perform saintly-miracles (*karāmāt*). These miracles range from walking on water, flying through the air to possessing the ability to mind-read.[167] For some, so profound is the bi-product that it can become more important than the original goal, that of drawing closer to the Divine. Yet for others, particularly disciples, miracles can serve as a yardstick against which the spiritual guide may be

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[165] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions in Islam* p. 193.

[166] It is in the story of Mūsā and Khiḍr, which for Sufis has been the source of a great many spiritual lessons, and which tells of the encounter between two of the most perfected of God's servants, that the basis for ᶜ*ilm ladunnī* is found. Many Sufi commentaries have explained the significance of the encounter between these two personalities, seeking to draw out the wisdoms contained within it. Ibn ᶜAjība's commentary on this is interesting: 'The knowledge which flows into the heart without any acquisition or learning is called ᶜ*ilm ladunnī.* The Prophet has said, "Whoever acts with what he knows, God will grant him knowledge of that which he did not know." This can only happen after the heart is purified from all imperfections and vices, and you disentangle it from all associations and things which occupy it. When the purification of the heart is complete, and it is attracted towards the presence of the Lord, knowledge issuing from God Himself, ᶜ*ilm ladunnī,* will flow into it; so too will flow into it the Divine Secrets, some of which are communicable and some of which remain incommunicable. The latter are a gift for their possessor. Some of this knowledge which flows in to the heart includes information about destiny, knowledge regarding the Sharī'a, secrets concerning legal particulars, and other things which are in the knowledge of God.' Cited in M, Sheikh, 'The Story of Musa and Khidr', *Sufi Wisdom,* 19 (Istanbul: Altinoluk, 2009).

[167] Schimmel explains: 'The theologians carefully discussed the theories of miracles: the saint's miracles are called *karāmāt,* "charismata", whereas the prophet's miracles are classified as *muᶜjizāt,* "what renders others incapable to do the same," and the two types must never be confused. The general term for anything extraordinary is *khāriq al-ᶜāda,* "what tears the custom" (of God); i.e. when God wants to disrupt the chain of cause and result to which we are accustomed, since He usually acts in this or that way, *khāriqa* may be performed and change the course of life. The mystics have also argued, in lengthy deliberations, about whether miracles are performed in the state of sobriety or in that of mystical intoxication. They have classified the miracles under different headings—Subkī distinguishes twenty-five main types—and the whole collections have been composed to show the various kinds of miracles performed by Muslim saints.' See *Mystical Dimensions of Islam,* p. 206. See also, L. Gardet, 'karāma', *EI*[2].

judged at the level of master and thus differentiated from both false guides and the common man.

Up until this point there is nothing that would unduly trouble the scripturalist mindset. However, when spiritual progress is used as a warrant to remove from oneself the burden of adhering to the Sharīᶜa, alarm bells begin to sound. Already in al-Āqḥiṣārī's time antinomianism presented a major affront to the conservative Sufi orders. It appears, according to the *Majālis,* that antinomianism was especially rampant amongst the Khalwatīs, the Sufi order which al-Āqḥiṣārī specifically singles out for attack. In actuality there were several antinomian Sufi orders which were to some extent flourishing during the period.[168]

Al-Āqḥiṣārī is particularly severe towards those who claim mystical revelation without having any credentials in jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and orthodox creed (*ᶜaqīda*). In this, he is completely in line with the widely held view among Sufis, that the novice aspiring to travel the spiritual path must learn the key precepts of these two religious sciences before commencing his journey.

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[168] The Turkish Khalwatīs during the 16th and 17th centuries were frequently criticised by the orthodox ᶜulamā', who were often also representatives of the Naqshbandī order. Their attacks against the Khalwatīs carried significant weight, and as explained by B.G. Martin, were focussed on several elements: 'A political one, which suggested the Khalwatīs were disloyal to the Ottoman state because of the vague Shiᶜī affinities; a doctrinal one—they were thought by the ᶜulamā' to be too close to Folk Islam and too far from the Sharīᶜa; and a kind of cultural hostility, which made the learned see them as the generators and enthusiastic spreaders of *bidᶜa,* undesirable innovation. This standpoint derived from the view that the ᶜulamā' had of themselves as the vanguard of orthodoxy. Then also, some of the ᶜulamā' were very intolerant of the way of life, the clothing, the disorderly personalities, and other externals of some Khalwatīs. They disapproved of the extreme *ghulāt* or *malāmatī* style in Sufism, which was as much a shock for them as the contemporary hippies and yippies are for some sections of the American middle classes.' See 'The Khalwatī Order of Dervishes', p. 283. On the antinomian Sufi orders of Ottoman Turkey see A. Karamustafa's *God's Unholy Servants: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Middle Period 1200-1550* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006).

> Advancing to higher levels before perfecting the foundations and demarcating the pathways is [mere] satanic haste and egotistic caprice. The fate of such a person is debasement in both this world (*dunyā*) and the Hereafter, since he will be deluded by mental fantasies and satanic illusions which he considers to be saintly miracles (*karāma*), though they are in fact traps which increase him in variegated forms of misguidance. This is since whoever busies himself with remembrance (*dhikr*) and spiritual exercises (*riyāḍa*) before learning of the science of *kalām* that amount which causes his creed to be sound and in accordance with *Ahl al-Sunna wa l-Jamā*ᶜ*a*, and by which he can protect himself against the uncertainties of the heretics; and [who learns] of the science of Jurisprudence that amount which causes his actions to be sound and in accordance with the immaculate Law (*al-Sharī*ᶜ*a al-muṭahhara*); it is probable that there will occur to him what seems to be the unveiling of some things or [that he witnesses] unnatural phenomena (*khāriq al-*ᶜ*āda*) by virtue of his spiritual exercise or the deception of Satan—this sort of thing has been narrated from some of the spiritually trained disbelievers. Thus he may believe that it is [an indication of] sainthood and a miracle, when in fact it is a trap and self-deceit; it is anything but sainthood and a true miracle.[169]

How is it that *kashf* and *karāma* serve as yardsticks by which a master is judged a true master, despite such spiritual heights being universally achievable and not the monopoly of Muslim saints? Al-Āqḥiṣārī is in no doubt that over-emphasising either *kashf* or *karāma* is useless since, for him, miracles have a natural explanation—they arise as a consequence of spiritual exercise just as, for example, great demonstrations of strength are possible as a result of intensive physical training. One would therefore do better to equate a miracle of the spirit with an extraordinary display of physical strength, and just as the latter should not be taken as an indication of God's endorsement of an individual,

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[169] *Majlis II,* f. 6v.

neither should the former.[170] But this is not all: there are those who are able to perform extraordinary feats and describe experiences of *kashf* who in fact could not be further away from the path of the Sufis.

> It sometimes happens that a person is able to achieve *kashf* at certain times as well as the ability to do something extraordinary such as flying through the air, etc, and then people take this as evidence of his sainthood (*wilāya*). Furthermore, they do not permit anyone to oppose him, despite the fact that such things may obtain at the hands of someone who is not in the habit of performing ritual purification or cleansing himself in accordance with the demands of religion. Now, the Prophet has said, 'God is clean and loves cleanliness.' Elsewhere, he has said, 'God is good and accepts only good.' Yet, such a person neither performs the ablution nor prays the obligatory prayers; indeed, [he may even] be defiled, or in contact with dogs, or in contact with rubbish tips and other impure places where there is to be found jinns and devils. How, then, can such a person be a saint (*walī*)? The saint, as is mentioned in the books of theology (*kutub kalāmiyya*), is one who knows God (*ᶜārif bi-llāh*) and His attributes, is constantly engaged in acts of obedience (*ṭaᶜāt*) and avoiding sinful deeds (*maᶜāṣī*) and prohibitions (*muḥarramāt*), is an avoider of vanities, passions and caprices, not one defiled by impurities, or in contact with dogs, or abandons the prayer and other ritual worship; neither is he one who has lost his mind, and uncovers his modesty, undressed.[171]

So much for the charlatan, but what about the one who has been hoodwinked? Why do people take the bait? Al-Āqḥiṣārī explains what he perceives to be the root of the problem, namely that people mistakenly believe that every extraordinary act constitutes a saintly miracle (*karāma*) and is *ipso facto* a sign indicating sainthood (*wilāya*). Such

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[170] This was very much the view of Ibn Taymiyya also. About the relativity of *kashf*, he remarks, 'A Christian monk, when he polishes his soul, sees in it the image of the Trinity, and is addressed through it. Since he had the image of Trinity before, his soul when polished by devotions, sees the image in vision. On the other hand, a Muslim who loves God and the Prophet in a dream as he believes him to be, and sees God in a dream as he imagines Him'. Cited in Ansari, *Sufism and Shariᶜa,* p. 135.

[171] *Majlis II*, f.8v.

people are no longer able to discern the friends of God from the friends of Satan; they are unaware that miracles of this sort can be performed by anyone.[172]

The author of the *Majālis* proceeds with a typology of miracles. He gives descriptions of the prophetic miracle (*muᶜjiza*), the saintly miracle (*karāma*) and the false miracle (*istidrāj*). This last category, according to Sufi masters, is one that disciples must be heedful of. *Istidrāj* occurs at the hands of those who are either non-believers or heretical Muslims and who acquire the ability to make the extraordinary happen. The miracle is false because it serves to both further the self-deception of the one performing it—he becomes convinced of his own *wilāya*—and it can also deceive onlookers into believing that such a person is a saint. The differences between the three categories of miracle are subtle and they can certainly not be told apart by the fundamental nature of the act. Indeed, only close scrutiny of the performer can reveal the true nature and quality of the act he performs. Al-Āqḥiṣārī explains,

> It is known assuredly that unnatural events are not exclusively connected with prophetic miracles (*muᶜjiza*) and saintly ones (*karāma*)—it may also be a false miracle (*istidrāj*). Whenever [the unnatural phenomenon] occurs at the hands of a person whose is not observant of the Sharīᶜa then it is judged to be a false miracle (*istidrāj*) rather than a [true] miracle (*karāma*). What is judged a [true] miracle is the impossible that manifests at the hands of a righteous worshipper whose probity is well-known. This aforementioned restriction is cautionary to exclude a false miracle, which is [defined] as a manifestation or unnatural event appearing at the hands of the wretched, such as the anti-Christ (*Dajjāl*), the Pharaoh (*Firᶜawn*) or the ignorant misguided and misguiding ones. For indeed the impossible can manifest at the hands of the pious just as it does at the hands of the wretched (*shaqiyy*).

[172] *Majlis II*, f. 8v.

> Whatever is manifest at the hands of the one who is governed by the Law (*Shar*ᶜ) is a cause for him to increase in his struggle to [perform acts of] worship, whereas whatever is manifest at the hands of he who is not governed by the *Sunna* is a cause for him to increase in distance and self-deceit. Satan continues to deceive him until he loosens the noose of Islam from his neck by getting him to deny the limits of the Law and its rulings, the lawful and the prohibited. Based on this, it is incumbent that the heedful worshipper ensures that all his actions are aligned with the judgements of the Sharīᶜa, as long as he is alive and in possession of his faculties (*ᶜāqil*). It is not permissible that he act in contravention of the judgement of the Sharīᶜa at any moment.[173]

In this passage al-Āqḥiṣārī provides guidelines for the purpose of determining both the quality of inspirations attained through spiritual exercise and the status of the performer of a miraculous act. For him, the Sharīᶜa is the ultimate criterion against which all thoughts and inspirations are measured; those thoughts which are aligned with the Sharīᶜa are accepted as truth while those which contravene it are to be ignored as satanic. Any miracle which does not result in its performer increasing in his adherence to the Sharīᶜa but instead distances him from it should be considered spurious. Al-Āqḥiṣārī clearly wants to render such inspirations and miracles subordinate to the Sharīᶜa, and would almost certainly be in keeping with the broader position of the ᶜulamā', who looked with mistrust at any source of knowledge not directly moderated by themselves.[174]

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[173] *Majlis II,* f. 7v.

[174] Al-Āqḥiṣārī accommodates spiritual unveiling, *kashf,* as a means towards knowledge, though makes it clear that it is subordinate to knowledge received in the Qur'an and *Sunna.* This accommodation is found also in the thought of Ibn Taymiyya, who accepted the epistemological value of *kashf*. He says, 'A section of the people of dialectic theology (*Ahl al-kalām*) and reason reject many of the things that [al-Ghazālī] has said, and think that devotion and purification of the heart does not contribute to knowledge. They are certainly wrong. The truth is that piety and purification of the heart are some of the great means of acquiring knowledge.' Cited in Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah,* p. 136.

To what extent is al-Āqḥiṣārī aligned with the Naqshbandī view on *kashf*? Aḥmad Sirhindī, a contemporary of our author and well-known initiator of the Mujaddidī line of Naqshbandī Sufism, serves as a useful comparator. He also denied that *kashf* is an independent source of knowledge, and therefore is not to be placed on par with the Sharīᶜa:

> [*Kashf*] can only act as an interpreter of the Prophetic revelation (*waḥy*) concerning matters of faith. "Inspiration (*ilhām*) only brings out the non-apparent truths of religion; it is not to add upon its truths. As *ijtihād* reveals rules that are implied (in the Sharīᶜa), similarly, *ilhām* reveals the hidden truths (of faith) which ordinary people are not able to see". Second, even in this capacity of interpreter, *kashf* is not infallible; like the *ijtihād* of a *mujtahid*, the *kashf* of a Sufi may be right or it may be wrong. Inspiration is uncertain (*ẓannī*) and the revelations of *kashf* do not generate truth. Third, if the ideas of a mystic in the light of his *kashf* contradict the views of the theologians of the *Ahl al-Sunna* they should be treated as the product of intoxication (*sukr*) of the Sufi and rejected as untrue. "There are mystical ideas which conflict with the views of the *Ahl al-ḥaqq* [...] in such cases the truth is with the ᶜulamā' of the *Ahl al-ḥaqq.* At another place [Sirhindi] writes: "The criterion of the validity of mystical ideas (*ᶜulūm ladunniyya*) is that they should agree with the clear ideas of the disciplines of the Sharīᶜa; if there is a hair's breadth of divergence, it is due to *sukr.* The truth is what the ᶜulamā' of the *Ahl al-Sunna wa l-Jamāᶜa* have established. All else is blasphemy (*zandaqa*), heresy (*ilḥād*), and the result of intoxication (*sukr*) and ecstasy (*ghalbat al-ḥāl*)". In other words, the *kashf* of the Sufi is subject to the authority not only of the text of the Qur'an and the *Sunna,* but also of their interpretation by theological reason.[175]

The degree of parity between al-Āqḥiṣārī and Sirhindī is unmistakable. Both are willing to accept knowledge acquired via *kashf* with the caveat that it is supported by the interpretations of the ᶜulamā'—indeed the attempt to appeal to the ᶜulamā' is a well known feature of Naqshbandī Sufism. In this system, Sharīᶜa takes its place at the heart of

[175] Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah,* p. 72.

the intellectual sphere; and Naqshbandīs were ever trying to prove that their path was the most aligned to the Sharīᶜa. There is no doubt that Sirhindī did so within the context of the Naqshbandī tradition; it would be premature at this stage to suggest that al-Āqḥiṣārī was also functioning within the same orientation.

Khalwa[176]

We are told by Ismāᶜīl Pāsha (d. 1339/1920) that 'Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Āqḥiṣārī al-Rūmī al-Ḥanafī was a shaykh of the Khalwatīs' (*min mashāyikh al-khalwatiyya*).[177] This is apparently corroborated by H. J. Kissling's genealogical tree of the Khalwatī Order, in which there is mention of an Aḥmad al-Rūmī at position sixty-six.[178] Whereas the name of Aḥmad al-Rūmī in Kissling's genealogical tree might refer to virtually anyone in seventeenth century Ottoman Turkey, the biographical entry of Ismāᶜīl Pāsha is unquestionably a reference to the author of the *Majālis*. This is because Pāsha lists several works linked to the Aḥmad al-Rūmī he means: *Risālat al-dukhāniyya, Sharḥ al-durr al-yatīm fī l-tajwīd* and *Majālis al-abrār*. The question that beckons is whether there is any truth behind the assertion that al-Āqḥiṣārī was a Khalwatī.

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176 The *khalwa* is a key practice of most Sufi orders, with special emphasis placed on it by the Kubrawīs, the Shādhilīs, the Qādirīs and, of course, the Khalwatīs. See H. Landolt, 'Khalwa', *EI²*.

177 I. Pāsha, *Hadiyyat al-ᶜārifīn asmā' al-mu'allifīn wa āthār al-muṣannifīn min Kashf al-ẓunūn* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ᶜilmiyya, 2008), 6: 142.

178 H. J. Kissling, *Aus der Geschichte des Chalvetijje-Ordens*, in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen. Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 103, 1953, p. 233-289; p. 285, 287 & Table 2. Michot also associates al-Āqḥiṣārī with the Khalwatīs in *L'Opium et le Cafe* (p. 54) and *Against Smoking*.

It seems to the present author that any link of al-Āqḥiṣārī to the Khalwatīs on the basis of the *Majālis* cannot be substantiated. In fact, there are some rather compelling reasons which would lead one to the view that the Ottoman scholar was diametrically opposed to the order. For one, al-Āqḥiṣārī strongly criticises the *Aṣḥāb al-khalwa*—"The People of Retreat". Since the *khalwa* is a central part of the Khalwatī spiritual regimen, this naturally raises serious doubts about any possible affiliation. Similarly, the cautious attitude of al-Āqḥiṣārī towards mystical visions, his criticism of audible *dhikr* and his opposition to musical accompaniment all add strength to the implausibility of any affiliation.

In the following translation, al-Āqḥiṣārī speaks about the *Aṣḥāb al-khalwa* and the problems he believes are associated with the practice of retreat:

> There are some people in our time who enter into retreat (*khalwa*) for three days or more, and who, when they reappear—even if after only [having been in retreat] once or twice—claim that they have attained a state of perfection and have reached the stations of the men [of the spiritual path]. [This is] despite the fact that they engage in actions which contravene the noble *Sunna*. If their likes are rebuked for what they engage in, they say, 'The proscription of that is but in the knowledge of the outward (*ᶜilm al-ẓāhir*), whereas we possess knowledge of the inward (*ᶜilm al-bāṭin*), therefore such things are permitted [to us]. Arrival at God, exalted is He, does not occur except when knowledge of the outward is rejected. You all take from the Book (i.e. the Qur'an), whereas we, by virtue of the retreat (*khalwa*) and the blessing of the shaykh, arrive at God, the Exalted. Various branches of knowledge are revealed to us without any need on our part to take recourse to the Book, or reading it in the presence of a teacher. If we produce hated deeds, or [a deed] which is prohibited, we are made aware of its proscription in visions. In this way we come to know of the permissible (*mubāḥ*) and the proscribed

> (*ḥarām*). As for what you say is proscribed, we have not been made aware of its proscription in visions, thus we know that it is not proscribed.'[179]

Despite the improbability of this conversation having taken place in these words, it is at least revealing of Al-Āqḥiṣārī's attitude towards the Khalwatīs. It is unclear why he would want to speak of "the People of *khalwa*" rather than the Khalwatīs specifically. Perhaps this was a way to disparage them; or perhaps it was his aim was to extend the scope of the referent beyond just Khalwatīs—there were after all several orders in Ottoman Turkey that had integrated the *khalwa* into their devotional regimen. It could be argued on the basis of al-Āqḥiṣārī's statement above that he is more interested in the ramifications of the *khalwa,* in particular those visions that could lead to abandoning the Sharīᶜa, and not the *khalwa* per se. This argument is not tenable, however, given that al-Āqḥiṣārī is otherwise silent about the *khalwa,* inasmuch as it has no place within his own vision of the mystical path. In short, at no point in the *Majālis* does al-Āqḥiṣārī have anything positive to say about the *khalwa qua* spiritual retreat.

It is also apparent from the statement above that al-Āqḥiṣārī has little faith in those who enter into *khalwa*, who then emerge claiming to have attained gnosis and subsequently use their renewed spiritual state to vindicate certain contraventions of the Sharīᶜa. In al-Āqḥiṣārī's epistemology, revealed knowledge—*al-sharīᶜa al-munazzala*—is the ultimate *magisterium*. Whilst he also accepts the epistemic value of reason, he does so with caveats and only when it is delimited by *kalām*-theology. As far as mystical visions are

[179] *Majlis I*, f. 4r.

concerned, they can only corroborate what is in Scripture; they are not an independent epistemic source.

Al-Āqḥiṣārī further states that the one who contravenes a single judgement of the Sharīᶜa has disobeyed God and thus is deserving of His punishment. Accordingly such a person is not to be considered from among the saints (*walī*), despite possessing the ability to perform miracles. In this regard al-Āqḥiṣārī is not content with his reader's mere agreement with his views on the *Aṣḥāb al-khalwa*—he demands participation in his campaign:

> The duty upon whoever hears the likes of these false utterances is to rebuke the speaker, whilst being absolutely certain about the falsity of his speech, without dither or hesitation. If one does not, then he is from among them, and shall be judged a heretic (*mubtadiᶜ*).[180]

For the Anatolian, the *Aṣḥāb al-khalwa* have either ignored or *ab initio* failed to acquaint themselves with the correct doctrines of the religion. Failing to recognise the all-pervasiveness of the Sharīᶜa, they have reached the point at which there is an 'affinity between them and Satan'.[181]

> [Satan] shows them such things of illumination that it becomes a cause for them to fabricate [lies] and to become deceived into thinking that they are good-doers and ennobled in the sight of God. They do not know that Satan continues to embellish for the people of *khalwa* and the people of *mujāhada*

[180] *Majlis I,* f. 5v.

[181] *Majlis I,* f. 5v.

> those acts (done) on the basis of desire (*shahwa*) and dreams (*ru'ya*), without recourse to the Sharīᶜa.[182]

Although the underlying reasons for al-Āqḥiṣārī's opposition towards the *Aṣḥāb al-khalwa* is becoming clearer, there is still a question that has not been fully answered: why does al-Āqḥiṣārī take such a hard-line position against them? Was he unaware of the evidence furnished by the advocates of the *khalwa,* namely that it was the practice of all the Prophets, and also continues to exists in sunnaic terms as practiced in the form of *iᶜtikāf,* or retreat in the mosque in the final nights of Ramadan? It is probable that al-Āqḥiṣārī saw *iᶜtikāf* as a separate category, distinct from *khalwa* and also unsuited to being a template for mystical retreat as practiced by Sufis. In any case, far more insidious for him are the resulting mystical visions. The *Majālis* suggests that some practitioners of the *khalwa* treated their mystical visions and inspirations as divine revelation, tantamount to the Qur'an. According to al-Āqḥiṣārī, such people make the following claim: 'The thoughts of the heart, a domain protected by God, the Exalted, are infallible.' Al-Āqḥiṣārī responds to this claim with the words, 'This is of the greatest tricks of the enemy (i.e. Satan)!'[183]

Much of what our author has to say about the types of inspiration which the retreat can induce has been taken from Ibn al-Qayyim's *Ighāthat al-lahafān,* mainly verbatim,

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[182] *Majlis I,* f. 5v.

[183] *Majlis I.* f. 5v.

somewhat reorganised and rarely directly cited.[184] He follows the same tripartite typology of the Ḥanbalī theologian, dividing inspirations into lordly (*ilāhiyya*), satanic (*shayṭāniyya*) and egoistic (*nafsāniyya*). Accordingly, he insists that a person should scrutinise his inspirations in order to decipher whether they are of lordly origin, and therefore to be heeded, or whether they are of satanic or egoistic origin, and therefore to be ignored. At no point is a person protected from inspirations of a satanic or egoistic nature, no matter how advanced on the mystical path they might be, since 'the two will never part from him until death; they flow in him like the blood in his veins.'[185] For al-Āqḥiṣārī, only a prophet can rely upon inspiration, for it is only a prophet who is blessed with infallibility (*ᶜiṣma*): 'The Prophets are middle-men between God, the Exalted, and His creatures insofar as they deliver His commands (*amr*) and prohibitions (*nahy*), His promises (*waᶜd*) and His threats (*waᶜīd*). Apart from them, no one is infallible.'[186] He is so adamant about this that, like Ibn al-Qayyim before him, he says that anyone who believes he no longer needs to adhere to the religion of the Prophet, citing his mystical visions and inspirations as a warrant, has committed the greatest act of disbelief (*min aᶜẓam al-nās kufran*). Even when someone is convinced that he has been inspired by the Lord, 'he must turn to a scholar who knows the [true] meaning of it; if the meaning is obvious (*ẓāhir*), then it need not be interpreted, only clarified. If, however, it is not obvious (*ẓāhir*), and so requires interpretation, then it should be done in the correct

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[184] See especially Ibn al-Qayyim, *Ighāthat al-lahafān fī maṣāyid al-shayṭān* (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-islāmī, 1989), 1: 192-4.

[185] *Majlis I,* f. 5v.

[186] *Majlis I,* f. 5v.

manner.'[187] What the "correct manner" means here is not clear, but probably means interpreting visions in a way that reconciles them with sacred law. For al-Āqḥiṣārī, Khalwatīs who claim to have received knowledge of the Sharīᶜa whilst in *khalwa* have nothing to do with the pristine religion as practiced by the *Salaf.* Their error is to pay heed to their visions and inspirations. The way of the *Salaf,* in contrast, was to give no such importance to inspirations:

> Indeed ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, in spite of his being the master of those inspired through meditation (*mulhamūn* and *muḥdathūn*) would, whenever inspirations appeared to him, not give them a second glance, or judge according to them or act upon them, until weighing them against the Book and the *Sunna.* These ignoramuses (*jāhil*), when they see visions, judge in favour of their inspirations rather than the Book and the *Sunna,* not giving them (i.e. the latter) a second glance. The realised scholars of the spiritual path, however, hold fast to the Book and the *Sunna,* and measure their actions, words, spiritual struggle and visions against them both. Whatever does not measure up against these two scales, or is infirm against these two witnesses, is not given any consideration.[188]

Is there any benefit in meditation if it can lead to destructive ends, such as the abandonment of the Sharīᶜa? Al-Āqḥiṣārī reminds us that the one busied in meditation must hold firmly to the Sharīᶜa in all his words, actions and states, without contravening it at all. He should know that the acceptable form of meditation is that which is done consistently and with concentration: 'Meditation has a starting point and an end point. Its starting point necessitates companionship and love, and so too does its end point.' It is a

[187] *Majlis I,* f. 5v.

[188] *Majlis I,* f. 5r.

means for drawing closer to the divine. It is not for any other purposes, according to our Ottoman scholar. The one graced with the ability to be constant in meditation will find solace in it, and in his heart will be sown love for the object of his remembrance. Such a person eventually hates being in any other state, and will naturally disassociate from all besides God. But that will be as far as it goes for al-Āqḥiṣārī. There is no use in hoping that a state of ultimate perfection can be attained through meditation of any kind, much less the attainment of infallible thoughts: 'Perfection is [only achieved] after death; it is then that a person is severed from all besides God, the Exalted.'[189]

This survey of al-Āqḥiṣārī's views on the *khalwa* has demonstrated that he is as rigoristic as Ibn al-Qayyim on the modality and purpose of *dhikr.* Anyone who abandons the Sharīᶜa because of inspirations received during *dhikr*, failing to make the Qur'an and *Sunna* the ultimate criterion for distinguishing the lordly inspirations from the satanic, is a disbeliever. But there is a point at which the *Majālis* and the *Ighāthat al-lahafān* diverge: the latter moves beyond simply opposing the *khalwa* and the claims of its practitioners; in passages immediately after his discussion on the *khalwa,* Ibn al-Qayyim takes issue with *Ṭarīqa*-oriented Sufism. He counts among the machinations (*kayd*) of Satan over men on the spiritual path the ability to misguide men towards all sorts of deviations—he lists things like the wearing of particular uniforms, the oath of allegiance (*bayᶜa*) to a single master (*shaykh muᶜayyan*), adherence to "invented spiritual orders" (*ṭarīqa mukhtaraᶜa*) and the acceptance of commands from a shaykh as though

[189] *Majlis I,* f. 5r.

they were religious obligations (*farīḍa*).[190] It is difficult not to see this as opposition to formalised Sufism. Is al-Āqḥiṣārī's position comparable? This important question needs to be treated since it aids in understanding how al-Āqḥiṣārī conceived the mystical path, how he envisaged it should be travelled and what his view was of the organised Sufism of his time.

Al-Āqḥiṣārī on Ṭarīqa-*oriented Sufism*

It is clear that in al-Āqḥiṣārī's religious *Weltanschauung* Sufism holds a central place. What is not as transparent, at least not from the content of the *Majālis,* is what al-Āqḥiṣārī's position is on organised Sufism, as configured in the form of *ṭarīqa*s. Was he affiliated to a specific order? Did he appropriate principles or practices of existing Ottoman orders or did he take a different approach to mysticism altogether? For answers, we need to look beyond *Majālis al-abrār* to other works in his corpus. One text in particular, *Risāla fī l-sulūk wa anna-hū lā budda li-l-sālik min murshid—The Epistle on Spiritual Wayfaring, and the Necessity for The Spiritual Aspirant to Have a Guide*, proves revelatory.[191] The title of the epistle alone speaks volumes since it challenges the popular image of the Qāḍīzādelis as anti-Sufi. And its content reveals much more about its author's approach, and will be sure to stir the imagination of even the most ardent sceptic.

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[190] See Ibn al-Qayyim, *Ighātha,* 1: 195-196.

[191] *Risāla fī l-sulūk wa anna-hū lā budda li-l-sālik min murshid,* MS. *Harput 429,* fols. 73r-78v.

In *Risāla fī l-sulūk* we are confronted by indications which, when synthesised, appear to betray al-Āqḥiṣārī as, firstly, an advocate of formalised, *ṭarīqa*-oriented Sufism, and, secondly, as a scholar who had a predilection for the Naqshbandī order. Commencing with an emphasis upon the importance of the mystical path, al-Āqḥiṣārī claims that man is only differentiated from other creatures by an innate capacity to reach the state of gnosis (*ma^{c}rifa*)[192]:

> Know that the nobility of man and his excellence over all other creatures is for nothing other than his preparedness to receive knowledge of God, the Exalted. He can only prepare for [receiving] knowledge of God with his heart; other limbs are useless. The intended meaning of "heart" here is not that curved piece of flesh, because this is a piece of flesh which is found in all creatures, even those which are dead. There is no [intrinsic] value in it. What is meant is the subtle spiritual light which is connected with this physical heart; its connection to it is as the connection of accidents with essences, or as attributes with their composites. The heart, in this sense, is referred to also as spirit (*rūḥ*), soul (*nafs*) and intellect (*^{c}aql*); it is the essence of man, it is the seat (*mahbaṭ*) of illuminations of the Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*); it is the thing which knows God, acts for God, strives towards God, unveils God, which is addressed (*mukhāṭab*), which is demanded of (*muṭālab*), rebuked (*mu^{c}ātab*) and punished (*mu^{c}āqab*). The limbs are but corollaries; they are at the service of [this heart] which it employs like a king employs his citizenry (*ra^{c}iyya*). [This heart] only finds solace in the remembrance of God, as God has said, 'It is only in the remembrance of God that hearts find contentment'.[193]

In this preamble, just as in the *Majālis,* al-Āqḥiṣārī makes it clear that Sufism lies at the very heart of his outlook, and it is on this basis that there can be no question of al-Āqḥiṣārī's opposition to Sufism. Thereafter he underlines the merit of remembering God

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[192] *Ma^{c}rifa* has been described by D. Brown as 'an apprehension of the divine unity in such a way that awareness of self is lost in awareness of God'. See *A New Introduction to Islam, 2nd Edition* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 202.

[193] *Risāla fī l-sulūk,* f. 73r.

via the formula *lā ilāha illallāh* and, as has been indicated at an earlier point in this chapter, the same formula is the foundation-stone of the Naqshbandī *dhikr*:

> The best of remembrance according to what is transmitted in the *ḥadīth* is the formula *lā ilāha illallāh*. It is essential that the spiritual aspirant (*sālik*) occupies himself with the remembrance of *lā ilāha illallāh* so that his heart becomes content and is prepared to receive knowledge of God (*maᶜrifat Allāh*), the Exalted. However, before he occupies himself with it, he must learn the foundations of dialectical theology (*kalām*), so that his creed is sound, in accordance with *Ahl al-Sunna wa l-Jamāᶜa*, and protected from the doubts of the heretics (*mubtadiᶜa*). This is because as long as the heart is defiled with the darkness of doctrinal heresy (*bidᶜa iᶜtiqādiyya*), the light of obedience cannot fill it. It is also imperative that he learns the foundations of Jurisprudence (*fiqh*), such that his actions are in accordance with the pristine Sharīᶜa, aligned with the four schools (*al-madhāhib al-arbaᶜa*). If he does not, then proceeding towards the inner meanings of things before perfecting the foundations and knowing its paths is mere satanic haste and egoistic caprice; it will result in disgrace (*faḍīḥa*) for such a person in this life and the next.[194]

It is clear from the above that al-Āqḥiṣārī, notwithstanding the centrality of Sufism within his religious *Weltanschauung*, is not willing to relegate Sharīᶜa-knowledge to a position subordinate to mystical experience, and in a manner rather typical of him, summarily reminds his reader that a foundational knowledge of orthodox creed—which in al-Āqḥiṣārī's estimation is of the Ashᶜarī-Māturīdī variety—and jurisprudence are essential prerequisites for the wayfarer on the mystical path.

[194] *Risāla fī l-sulūk,* f. 73r.

The idea that a "true shaykh"[195] is both "perfect" (*kāmil*) and "perfecting" (*mukammil*) is a familiar trope in Naqshbandī Sufism.[196] Once such a shaykh is discovered, the aspiring wayfarer should not delay in offering him allegiance (*bay*ᶜ*a*), so that he may receive a license to perform the *dhikr.* The *bay*ᶜ*a* also sets into motion a relationship which is said to surpass even the bond between parent and child. Naqshbandīs are well-known for the emphasis they place upon a disciple fixing his heart upon the personality of the shaykh, a state known as *rābiṭa*. Whether in his presence or absence, the disciple should observe a constant bond with his shaykh. On this Ter Haar notes, 'The task of the spiritual guide *vis-a-vis* his novice in the Naqshbandī Order is quite often described as a process of "upbringing" (*tarbiyyat*).'[197] The task of "upbringing" is conjoined with the more traditional role of the shaykh as instructor (*mu*ᶜ*allim*), with the distinction that the former role now takes priority and thus sets apart the Naqshbandī shaykh from the masters of other orders. As regards al-Āqḥiṣārī's view of the *murshid-murīd* relationship, he advocates a variation of the relationship which demands the *murīd* display complete subservience to the *murshid*. He even pushes the Ghazālian approach which dictates that the *murshid-murīd* relationship be analogous to the corpse (here the *murīd*) in the hands of a person preparing it for burial (here the *murshid*). The following excerpt provides

[195] In Sufism, the *shaykh* is the spiritual master (plural: *shuyūkh, mashāyikh*). Having himself traversed the mystical path, he knows its traps and dangers, and is therefore essential for the aspiring novice or *murīd*, who must place himself totally under his guidance. He thus becomes the novice's spiritual father and 'educator', *al-shaykh al-murabbī*. His closeness to God makes him a saint (*walī*), and provides the basis for his authority. See E. Geoffroy, 'Shaykh', *EI*².

[196] Ter Haar, 'The Importance of the Spiritual Guide in the Naqshbandī Order', p. 319.

[197] Ter Haar, 'The Importance of the Spiritual Guide in the Naqshbandī Order', p. 319.

more details on this theme, making clear just how proximate al-Āqḥiṣārī's version of the *murshid-murīd* relationship is to the Naqshbandī order:

> Furthermore, through the course of his preoccupation [with *dhikr*], he must have a righteous and perfected shaykh and guide who serves as a representative of the Prophet, God's peace and blessings be upon him, thereby ensuring that the disciple (*murīd*) is protected from slippage purged of his base traits, and endowed with higher virtues in their place. The condition for any shaykh to play the role of representative of the Prophet is that he be a scholar who adheres to the Sharīᶜa in his words, deeds and beliefs; [he] should himself be following a person of spiritual insight who is connected in an initiatic chain (*silsila*) all the way back to the Prophet. He should excel in the training of his ego (*riyāḍat nafsihi*) and should imbibe all excellent virtues. The trouble is that, today it is rare to find such a man—he is even more precious than red sulphur (*al-kibrīt al-aḥmar*).[198] Whoever is fortunate enough to find such a shaykh should respect him outwardly and inwardly. As for outward respect, he should not argue with him or protest in his presence about issues, even if he knows [the shaykh] has erred; instead, he should do whatever he is ordered to do, and is within his capacity. He should not ostentatiously perform the supererogatory prayer in his [shaykh's] presence. As for inward respect, it is not to oppose inwardly whatever he has accepted from his shaykh outwardly, so that he does not become a hypocrite. If he is incapable of this, he should abandon the *ṣuḥba* [of his shaykh] until [such a time as] his outward [state] is in harmony with his inward [state]. This is since the condition for receiving Divine emanations (*istifāḍa*) from the Unitary Presence (*ḥaḍra waḥdāniyya*) is to have the heart connected (*rabṭ*) with the shaykh in a way of submission and love. He should believe that this manifestation is what God himself has apportioned for him (*lil ifāḍa ᶜalayhi*), and that he would not have attained this emanation were it not for his shaykh —though the world might be full of shaykhs. And if the interior (*bāṭin*) of a *murīd* becomes transfixed on another, his interior will not expand sufficiently to experience the Unitary Presence.[199]

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[198] Ter Haar cites Muḥammad Pārsā, disciple, second successor and chief ideologue of Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, who shares the same sentiment as al-Āqḥiṣārī in his *Qudsiyya Kalimāt-i Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband.* 'Previously there were many competent guides, but in recent times their number has fallen sharply, to such an extent that they have become an exceptional phenomenon, even more precious than red sulphur'. 'The Importance of the Spiritual Guide in the Naqshbandī Order', p. 318. It is unlikely that al-Āqḥiṣārī knew Pārsā's work. On the expression "red sulphur" (*kibrīt aḥmar*), see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam,* pp. 236-237.

[199] *Risāla fī l-sulūk,* f. 74v.

As al-Āqḥiṣārī proceeds with his exposition of the *murshid-murīd* relationship, his position appears to move ever more in line with the relationship as it was conceived in the Naqshbandī tradition. I argue that what confronts us in the following excerpt is quite possibly the most striking evidence of our author's alignment with the order. For one, he speaks explicitly about the *rābiṭa.* Furthermore, there is a description of how the central formula of *dhikr, lā ilāha illallāh* is to be read—yet again we are presented with a technique that is characteristic of the Naqshbandīs. Finally, there is a discussion on *fanā',* which appears to be a direct appropriation from the Naqshbandīs:[200]

> It is important for the disciple to be focussed in one direction (*jiha*), for his orientation towards God is via that direction. That direction is also the spirit of the Messenger of God, prayers and peace be upon him, who is in the world of spirits (*ᶜālam al-arwāḥ*); just as the prayer is not accepted unless it is done towards the Kaᶜba, emanation (*fayḍ*) is not attained from God except by way of following the Prophet and submitting to him, and attaching the heart (*rabṭ al-qalb*) to his prophethood (*nubuwwa*), and the belief that he is the means (*wasīla*) towards God, not any other Prophet. For although other Prophets were upon truth, no emanation can be attained without connecting the heart to the Messenger of God (i.e. Muḥammad). Accordingly, since the shaykh is a representative of the Messenger of God, it is necessary that [the disciple] orients himself completely towards his shaykh, by way of connecting his heart to him. He should have certainty that emanation cannot be obtained except via his shaykh—despite the existence of other saints who are also guides and guided themselves. He should be sure that his seeking of support from his shaykh is tantamount to seeking support from the Messenger of God, since his shaykh has taken [the path] from his shaykh, who has taken it from his shaykh to his shaykh, all the way back to the Messenger of God [...] Thus

[200] For the Naqshbandīs, *fanā'* is a process of three stages: the first is *fanā' fī l-shaykh,* the second, *fanā' fī l-rasūl* and the last is *fanā' fī Allāh.* These three steps allow the process of annihilation to proceed in a controlled and systematic way. Above all, they ensure that the shaykh is intimately involved in the journeying of the *murīd* along the mystical path, and cement firmly the idea that the goal of the mystical path cannot be achieved without complete obedience to the shaykh. On the stages of *fanā',* see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam,* pp. 236-237 and Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya,* p. 60.

> the connection of the heart with the shaykh is a major corner-stone of emanation. In fact, it is the ultimate corner-stone, and for this reason, all Shaykhs have greatly emphasised this corner-stone. They have gone so far as to say that the disciple should resemble, in his obedience to his shaykh, the dead body [in its submission] to the one who is tasked with performing its funeral ablution.[201]

These are unlikely words from a man whose writing was pivotal for the Qāḍīzādelis. The Divine emanation (*fayḍ*) which al-Āqḥiṣārī speaks of here, or the "enabling energy", as it has been described by one scholar of the Naqshbandī tradition,[202] is only achieved via the shaykh, who is thought of as the representative of the Prophet Muḥammad in the lower world (*dunyā*). The Prophet himself stands out among all other Prophets as the perfect receptacle of this *fayḍ*. What makes orienting towards a shaykh all the more important is that it is impossible to orientate oneself directly towards the Divine—man is bound by direction whereas the Divine is not. A shaykh is thus the only means for a disciple to experience *fayḍ* and thus achieve the desired ends of the path. When al-Āqḥiṣārī speaks about the connection of the disciple's heart (*rabṭ al-qalb*) with the shaykh's, there is an echo of the Naqshbandī emphasis on the same, expressed by one of the order's masters in the following manner: 'In our path, arriving at the station of perfection is related to a connection (*rābiṭa*) with an exemplary shaykh. The sincere disciple, through his love of the shaykh, is a recipient of divine energy (*fayḍ*) from the interior (*bāṭin*) of the shaykh, and becomes coloured with the colour of the shaykh; [he] has an essential connection to the shaykh [...] this they call annihilation in the shaykh, the beginning of true annihilation

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[201] *Risāla fī l-sulūk,* f. 74r.

[202] A. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Shaykh* (Colombia: University of South Carolina, 1998), p. 118.

[in God]. [Anyone engaged in] *dhikr* without bonding his heart to the master, and without achieving annihilation in the shaykh, will not arrive.'[203]

Al-Āqḥiṣārī also emphasised the importance of the formula *lā ilāha illallāh* in *Majālis al-abrār*, explaining that it is the single-most important formula of the spiritual path. However, his description of how a *murīd* incorporates it into *dhikr* is remarkable.

> Once the *murīd* has received the Word of Unicity (*kalimat al-tawḥīd*) from his shaykh, he should busy himself with great energy. When repeating the formula, he should begin by drawing the *lā ilāha* from the centre of his chest, which is the home of the soul; he should then lengthen the utterance of *lā ilāha* whilst he moves his head towards his right shoulder; focussing his heart on the magnificence of God; this should suppress the soul; then he inclines his head towards his left side, thrashing *illallāh* with strength upon the physical heart, the position of which is slightly left of the chest, under the left breast; this should be done in such a way that the *dhikr* impacts upon the heart, and the heat of the fire reaches the heart.[204]

Finally, al-Āqḥiṣārī divulges to the reader the fruits of *dhikr.* In a style which is perhaps evocative of Ibn 'Arabī or Aḥmad Sirhindī, he charts the three degrees or stations that a wayfarer (*sālik*) traverses on the path of annihilation, and emphasises at each point just how pivotal the shaykh's role is in protecting both the sanity and sanctity of the *murīd*, ensuring that he does not fall victim to the machinations of the ego, common symptoms of the process of annihilation.

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[203] A quotation of Khwāja Muḥammad Maᶜṣūm (d. 1096/1684), shaykh of the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidīs after Aḥmad Sirhindī, cited in Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet,* p. 131.

[204] *Risāla fī l-sulūk,* f. 75v.

> The *murīd* should repeat the formula [*lā ilāha illallāh*] until the darkness of existence is drowned out by the view of his witnessing (*naẓar shuhūdihī*) and the Light of Divine Oneness (*nūr al-tawḥīd*) is manifested. At this point, errors should be guarded against. The Divine Manifestation (*tajallī*) and first-hand experience of Oneness (*tawḥīd ᶜiyānī*), according to the saying of the shaykhs and realised teachers (*muḥaqqiq*), is of three stations (*martaba*): The first station is that of Unity in Action (*al-tawḥīd fī l-afᶜāl*). The wayfarer (*sālik*) at this station witnesses God's agency in the world, and among his creatures. The acts of servants are shut-off to him so that he does not see them as actors. He is thus in utmost need of a perfect guide and noble shaykh, who might instruct him on how to differentiate actions of volition [from non-volitionary actions], and thereby escape from the doubt he is in, and so that he does not adopt the doctrine of involuntarism (*al-jary al-bāṭil*). The second station is that of Unity in Attributes (*al-tawḥīd fī l-ṣifāt*); the wayfarer at this station is shown the eternal attributes of God. When this happens, all accidental attributes are shut off to him, and he becomes unconscious of himself. He claims to have absolute power, complete knowledge and to possess all the eternal attributes. He forgets servitude (*ᶜubūdiyya*) and claims lordship (*rubūbiyya*) [...] He is thus in the utmost need of being shown evidence of his own existence and nature, so that he does not adopt the doctrine of those who believe in *waḥdat al-wujūd* (*al-wujūdiyyūn*), those heretics (*mulḥidūn*) who are both misguided and misguiding. The third station is that of Unity of Essence (*al-tawḥīd fī l-dhāt*); the wayfarer at this station is shown the essence of God (*dhāt Allāh*), the Exalted, and becomes a person of unicity (*ahl al-waḥda*), veiled from multiplicity, unconscious of his own actions, attributes and self; he thus is in utmost need of being shown evidence of multiplicity, his own actions, attributes and self. Even non-necessary existence, merely potential (*mumkin*) because *tawḥīd,* according to al-Junayd al-Baghdādī, is the singling out of the Eternal (*qadīm*) from the accidental (*ḥādith*) [...] The Ancients (*Salaf*) would say, 'Whoever does not have a shaykh, Satan is his shaykh'. Indeed the perfect shaykh who clings to the Sharīᶜa protects the *murīd*s when the veils fall away from them and unicity is unveiled from the perils of predestination (*jabr*) and heresy (*ilḥād*), and the belittling of the Sharīᶜa.[205]

A more detailed survey of the *Risāla fī l-sulūk* falls outside the scope of this study. Yet these passages alone highlight just how central Sufism is in al-Āqḥiṣārī's thought. Whilst

[205] *Risāla fī l-sulūk*, f. 76v.

there is not enough here to suggest he was a shaykh or disciple of the Naqshbandī path, at the very least the alignment with key aspects of Naqshbandī devotion is clearly recognisable, particularly in regards to the *murshid-murīd* relationship. And though al-Āqḥiṣārī does not explicitly advocate formal initiation into a *ṭarīqa,* there is a strong suggestion that he viewed a structured approach to the mystical path as an important dimension of the disciple's journeying.

The convergences between al-Āqḥiṣārī's conceptualisation of the mystical path and the Naqshbandī path makes more sense if considered in the context of the penetration of the Naqshbandīs into the Ottoman learned institution, which by al-Āqḥiṣārī's age was already a century-old phenomenon. It is highly unlikely that his conceptualisation was informed by the devotional practices of a Sufi order other than the Naqshbandīs; indeed the only realistic alternative to the Naqshbandīs in his time would have been the Khalwatīs, but given what we now know about al-Āqḥiṣārī's attitude to them, it is highly improbable that he would have appropriated much at all from them. Finally, to return to the question raised in the previous section, we are now also in a position to conclude that al-Āqḥiṣārī did not share the *Ighātha'*s opposition to *ṭarīqa*-oriented Sufism. This important finding demonstrates the limitations of Ibn al-Qayyim's influence upon al-Āqḥiṣārī.

Saints: Dead and Alive

Most Sufi orders afford a special position to saints, termed *awliyā'*. The origins of the cult of saint veneration are unclear and may have developed as a corollary of the sanctified status of the Prophet Muḥammad, appropriated by Muslims from foreign religious traditions, or otherwise. Whatever the case, the practice soon evolved into a complex of different practices and beliefs. Intercession, miracles, ceremonies at shrines and other forms of veneration became intricately woven into the cult of saints; its popularity soon became a concern of the jurists and theologians, and even at times the state.[206]

One aspect of the cult of saints, which stems from the ideas of Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, and after him Ibn al-ᶜArabī, was the idea that saints were able to achieve stations that surpassed even those of the Prophets. With this was associated the concept of *khatm al-wilāya,* the seal of sainthood. Al-Āqḥiṣārī had strong views on this question, and composed an epistle on it.

> You should know that the Muslims are agreed (*muttafiqūn*) about the excellence of a prophet over the saint. The prophet combines both the station of sainthood (*martabat al-wilāya*) and the station of prophethood (*martabat al-nubuwwa*). Given that the saint does not reach the degree of the prophet—since from the exclusivity of the prophet is that, along with sainthood being a firmly established [trait] within him, he is also protected (*maᶜṣūm*) from sin (*maᶜṣiya*), safe (*ma'mūn*) from an evil end (*sū' al-khātima*) by testimony of the incontrovertible texts (*al-nuṣūṣ al-qāṭiᶜa*) [of the Qur'an and *ḥadīth*], honoured by revelation (*musharraf bi-l-waḥy*), dispatched (*mabᶜūth*) with [the task of] reforming the world and organising the immanent and the eternal, among other perfections which are not to be found within the saint—no

[206] For more on this theme, see M. Schöller, *The Living and the Dead in Islam: Studies in Arabic Epitaphs, Vol. II: Epitaphs in Context* (Wiesbaden, 2004), esp. Chapter 1.

> weight should be given to some of the heretical Karrāmīs who say that the saint can reach the degree of prophet, or those Bāṭinīs who say that sainthood is better than prophethood [...] Anyone who receives the message of [the Prophet], upon him be peace, cannot attain to sainthood without following him. Whoever thinks that there are saints who can guide to God without need of [the Prophet], upon him be peace, is a heretic (*mulḥid*) and disbeliever (*kāfir*). It is incorrect for him to furnish proof from the story of Mūsā and al-Khiḍr, since Mūsā, upon him be peace, was not sent to al-Khiḍr, but rather to the Children of Israel; it was not incumbent upon al-Khiḍr to follow him. This said, what al-Khiḍr did was not a contravention of the Sharīᶜa; rather, it was in accordance with it, but because Mūsā was not aware of the causes which permitted those [actions of al-Khiḍr], he censured him [...] As for the message of our master Muḥammad, upon him be peace, it is general (*ᶜāmma*) for all creatures (*khalq*)—the jinn from them and men. There is no path to God except by following him, upon him be peace, inwardly (*bāṭinan*) and outwardly (*ẓāhiran*).[207]

Existing literature on the Qāḍīzādelis already shows that the visitation of graves and the veneration of saints were two major points of contention between the Qāḍīzādelis and their opponents. It is clear from the intensity of the debate that there had to be a great deal at stake. And given the importance of the intercession of saints in Sufism, it is not difficult to understand why this would be so.[208] By the time of Kātib Çelebi's survey of the visitation of graves in his *Mizān al-ḥaqq,* the debate is likely to have become saturated. In chapter thirteen of the *Mīzān,* Kātib Çelebi makes the following remarks:

> Most lawyers have said, 'As the question of pilgrimage to tombs had become hotly disputed, both parties found it necessary to resort to arbitration. At the arbitration, the middle course was chosen, and this ruling was given; those who understand the subtleties of the attachment of the soul to the body and to the tomb, and who find a difference between appeals made at tombs and those made elsewhere, may address themselves to the tombs, subject to certain

[207] MS *Harput 429*, f. 38r-39r.

[208] For more on the intercession of saints in Islam, see V.J. Hoffmann, 'Intercession', *EI²*.

> conditions. This some sheykhs have done, and their doing so is not polytheism […] So long as there is no intention of worshipping the intermediary, no polytheism is involved. The proper behaviour for those who take the middle course is this: when they reach the goal of their pilgrimage they should do no more than recite a fatiha to win the approval of God (glorious is his splendour) and dedicate the reward thereof to the soul of the occupant of the grave. They should have no other idea. They should neither kiss the tomb nor cling to it. If fortunate enough to visit the hallowed tomb of the Lord of Men, the Prophet, they should stand before it with hands clasped in front of them, in the prescribed manner, in heartfelt devotion and prayer. They should not be guilty of the indecorum of clinging to the grill or kissing it. This is the form laid down in the holy law. Any other mode of behaviour is evidence of disrespect.[209]

Kātib Çelebi's account is revealing. Firstly, it becomes clear from the detail he provides that the position of the ᶜulamā' was one of opposition to visiting graves for the purpose of beseeching the deceased, irrespective of their status when alive. This is significant because Qāḍīzāde and his sympathisers, who obviously shared this oppositional stance, are frequently presented by scholars as having been almost unique in their strict attitude on the matter. Secondly, Kātib Çelebi himself clearly sides with the official position, namely the proscription of anything at a grave other than supplicating for the deceased. He also is opposed to the popular practices associated with graves, such as kissing, touching or doing anything physical to them. In the *Mizān* he describes Ibn Taymiyya as the first to seriously proscribe the visitation of tombs; he also writes about the opposition Ibn Taymiyya faced for his views. It is interesting that, in Kātib Çelebi's mind, the issue had reached an impasse—it was where only arbitration could resolve the conflict. Kātib Çelebi speaks about a middle way, but we are not told who formulated it; what is clear is

[209] Kātib Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth,* pp. 92-94.

that he believes that the ᶜulamā' opposed to the visitation of graves, and supplication to the deceased, had veered towards fanaticism.

At this point it is worth noting who the most prominent opponents of this practice were during this period. Birgili was probably the first in Ottoman society to highlight the problem of visiting graves, marshalling arguments from Ibn al-Qayyim in order to support his case. He dedicates an epistle to this, *Risāla fī ziyārat al-qubūr*, and also treats the subject in his *Ṭarīqat al-Muḥammadiyya* and the *Vasiyyet-nāme.* His reliance on Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim is striking, though he desists from explicitly mentioning the former. Birgili's epistle is virtually replicated by Qāḍīzāde in his *Irshād al-ᶜuqūl.* Al-Āqḥiṣārī is once more the third man: in *Majālis al-abrār, Majlis XVII* is devoted to the prohibition of praying near tombs. Like Birgili, al-Āqḥiṣārī composed an epistle on the subject, *Radd ᶜalā al-maqābiriyya—A Refutation of the Grave-worshippers*. In keeping with his revivalist comrades, he is explicit about his main source, Ibn al-Qayyim's *Ighātha*, and is particularly emphatic about his adulation for the mediaeval Ḥanbalī in the introduction:

> These pages I have taken from *Ighāthat al-lahafān fī makāyid al-shayṭān* of the shaykh, the imām, the *ᶜallāma,* Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya—may God accept his soul among the souls of those who have returned to their Lord, both pleasing and pleased. I append to this some of what I have discovered in other authoritative books. This is because many people today have made shrines out of some tombs, to which they pray, make sacrificial offerings, and various kinds of acts and statements emanate from them which do not befit People of Faith (*ahl al-īmān*). I thus wanted to make clear the Sharīᶜa verdict

> regarding this matter, so that the truth stands clear from falsehood for all who want to correct and purify faith from the machinations of Satan.[210]

Al-Āqḥiṣārī begins with the Prophetic tradition, 'May the curse of God be upon those Jews and the Christians who took the graves of their Prophets as places of prostration (*masājid*).'[211] This tradition, found in *Maṣābīḥ al-sunna,* is then explained as an invocation of the Prophet against those Jews and Christians who had taken to offering prayers at the burial sites of prophets: '[They do so] either because they deem prostration at graves as an act of reverence (*taʿẓīm*)—although it is in fact an act of open associationism (*shirk jalī*); or they suspect (*ẓannan*) that to face such graves in the moment of prayer is more acceptable to God, the Exalted, insofar as it [constitutes] both the worship of God and reverence for a prophet—this is hidden associationism (*shirk khafī*). It is for this reason that the Prophet, upon him be peace, prohibited his nation from praying at graves, so that they avoid resembling [Jews and Christians], and even when their intentions for doing so are altogether different.'[212]

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[210] *Radd ʿalā al-maqābariyya,* MS *Harput 429*, f. 100r.

[211] *Majlis XVII,* f. 50v.

[212] *Majlis XVII,* f. 50v.

The Ottoman revivalist, after tracing idolatry back to the era of Noah,[213] goes on to cite Ibn al-Qayyim's *Ighāthat al-lahafān* extensively:

> Ibn al-Qayyim in the *Ighātha* says, quoting his shaykh [i.e. Ibn Taymiyya], 'The cause (*ᶜilla*) for which the Legislator (*Shāriᶜ*) prohibited taking graves as places of worship is that, many people commit either major associationism (*al-shirk al-akbar*) or something less than it. Indeed associationism (*shirk*) at the grave of a man deemed righteous is dearer to the hearts than associationism [committed] at a tree or a rock. This is why you will find many people at graves standing humbly, out of fear and humility, worshipping reverently (*fī qulūbihim*), in a manner which they do not [display] even at the houses of God (*buyūt Allāh*), the Exalted, or before dawn (*waqt al-saḥar*). There they hope (*rajā*) for things through the grace (*baraka*) of prayer and supplication which they do not hope for at mosques. In order to terminate the fundamental constituent (*mādda*) of this harm (*mafsada*), the Prophet, upon him be peace, prohibited praying at graves altogether, even if the praying person does not do so to attain blessing from the place, just as he prohibited prayers at the rising and the setting of the sun, and when it reaches its zenith, because these are times at which the Pagans (*Mushrikūn*) worship the sun. So he prohibited his nation from praying at these times even if their intention is not that of the Pagans. If a man prays at a grave because he believes it to be blessed, then [his act] is nothing short of war (*ᶜayn al-muḥāraba*) against God and His Messenger, a contravention of His religion (*dīn*) and inventing religion (*ibtidāᶜ dīn*), which God has not given permission for. Indeed practices of worship are rooted in adherence to the *Sunna*, not in whims and innovation. Muslims are in agreement about the religion of their Prophet, [which states] that praying at graves is forbidden because there is a danger of committing [an act] of associationism (*fitnat l-shirk*) and resemblance to idolatry (*'ibādat al-aṣnām*).[214]

[213] Al-Āqḥiṣārī says, 'The first instance of idolatry occurred amongst the people of the Prophet Nūḥ, upon him be peace. It happened because of their obsession (*ᶜukūf*) with graves. This is what God informs of in His Book, where He says, 'Noah said: "O my Lord! They have disobeyed me and they follow (men) whose wealth and children give them no increase but only loss. And they have devised a tremendous Plot and they have said (to each other), 'Abandon not your gods: Abandon neither Wadd nor Suwā', neither Yagūth nor Yaᶜūq, nor Naṣr.' Ibn 'Abbās, God be pleased with him, and others from the ancients (*Salaf*) have said, 'These people were a righteous lot among the tribe of Nūḥ, upon him be peace. Then the people became obsessed with graves, making idols. Time elapsed and they started to worship them. These were the beginnings of idol worship.' See *Majlis XVII,* f. 50v.

[214] *Majlis XVII,* f. 50r.

For all the proofs furnished by al-Āqḥiṣārī on the question of prayer and supplications at graves, many Ottomans were still not in agreement with the idea of prohibition. It is perhaps for this reason that al-Āqḥiṣārī takes up a very hard-line position, namely that the act of visiting graves can become itself unlawful. Here he demonstrates a close affinity with Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim:

> The visitation of graves is of two sorts: the lawful visitation (*ziyāra shar*^{c}*iyya*) and the innovated visitation (*ziyāra bid*^{c}*iyya*). As for the former, which the Prophet himself permitted, the purpose of it is two things: firstly to serve as a warning (*itti*^{c}*āẓ*) and a lesson (*i*^{c}*tibār*) for the visitor; and secondly for the benefit of the people buried, who receive the salutations of the visitor and his invocations for them. As for the latter, it is that visit for which prayer is intended [at the graves], or circumambulation of them, kissing them, pressing of cheeks against them, taking soil from them, invoking their occupiers, and seeking their intercession (*istighātha*), asking them for victory (*naṣr*), for provision (*rizq*), health, children, for relief from distress and other similar needs. Such was the way of the idolaters, who would ask of their idols. And indeed this is the source of this innovated, idolatrous adage (*ziyāda bid*^{c}*iyya shirkiyya*). None of it whatsoever is derived legitimately and in accordance with the consensus of the Muslims, since the Messenger of the Lord of the Worlds did nothing of the sort, and neither did his Companions, their successors or the imams of this religion.[215]

This view is aligned with the views of both Birgili and Qāḍīzāde,[216] and would have pitted him, along with his intellectual comrades, against the head of the Khalwatīs, Siwāsī

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[215] *Majlis XVII*, f. 50r.

[216] See Birgili's *Radd al-Qabariyya* (Süleymaniye Library, MS Esad Efendi 3780), ff. 54v-55v and Qāḍīzāde's *Irshād al-*^{c}*uqūl,* f. 173r. Üsṭüwānī Meḥmed Efendi stated his views on visiting the graves in his collection of discourses. In a section on *shirk* he outlines the unlawfulness of praying to the dead. See *Kitāb-i Üsṭüwānī*, f. 176v.

Efendi, and others who permitted the visiting of graves to seek the intercession of the dead.[217]

It is worth considering at this point the extent to which al-Āqḥiṣārī's views on the visiting of graves forms a departure from Naqshbandī Sufism—is his view the point at which two paths finally diverge? The Naqshbandīs, especially in the post-Mujaddidī phase, placed great importance upon visiting the shrines of the great saints. In modern Turkey, many of the great *turbas* were renovated by Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī patrons. Yet it is also true that Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī Sufism is not homogeneous. Indeed it might even be viewed as having taken a distinctly popular form in the modern age. Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī and Shāh Waliullāh (d. 1175/1762) both adopted strict positions on the visitation of shrines. They both also imposed strict conditions on what is permissible to do at shrines, and certainly made no allowances for any form of worship or invocation to the souls of the deceased.[218] Both lived through times when pilgrimages to shrines were commonplace and certainly al-Āqḥiṣārī, Birgili and Qāḍīzāde were responding to similar practices in the Ottoman context. It is therefore quite plausible that al-Āqḥiṣārī's condemnation was consistent with a Naqshbandī paradigm.

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[217] Siwāsī Efendi's views in support of this are found in his *Durar al-ᶜaqā'id,* f. 58v. There he argues that the visitation of the grave is of benefit to both the visitor and the soul of the deceased. If a righteous person is visiting the soul of a sinner, then the former's supplication could reduce the punishment of the latter. Alternatively, if the deceased led a righteous life—or was a saint—the visitor is set to benefit from emanation (*fayḍ*) and mystical light (*nūr*) by virtue of his contact with the soul of the deceased. He quotes in this regard a *ḥadīth,* 'When you have difficulties in your affairs, seek help from the inhabitants of graves.' For more details of Siwāsī's argument, refer to Özturk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy', pp. 368-369.

[218] On Shāh Waliullāh, see J.M.S. Baljo, 'Shah Waliullah and the Dargah,' in *Muslim Shrines in India,* edited by C.W. Troll (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2nd Edition 2004), pp. 189-197.

It is worthy of note that to prohibit the visitation of shrines does not imply an opposition to communicating with the spirits of the deceased. As part of their daily liturgy, Naqshbandīs seek to establish contact with the spirits of past masters during the *rābiṭa,* hoping to attain divine emanation by this. The *rābiṭa* is believed to facilitate a connection with the spirits of Prophets and saints without having to traverse geographical space. This is also one of the reasons that Naqshbandīs advocate the principle of *safar dar waṭan.* Given this, there are Naqshbandīs who could readily proscribe such practices as the visitation of shrines when they perceived this to lead to greater harm—invoking principles such as *sadd al-dharīᶜa*[219]—without at the same time barring a connection to the souls of deceased saints.

Conclusion

The centrality of Sufism in the thought of Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqhiṣārī is beyond doubt. He is unambivalent about his belief in the necessity for every Muslim to be engaged in personal spiritual struggle; his position is clear about the seriousness with which believers are to engage in meditation, and articulates how powerful a tool this is for achieving spiritual ascension, and as a key to unlocking direct knowledge (*maᶜrifa*) of God. He is unyielding about the essential need for a guiding shaykh who, in al-Āqḥiṣārī's view, serves as the representative of the Messenger of God, ensuring that the disciple does not

[219] Al-Āqḥiṣārī argues that the Prophet prohibited the visiting of graves during early Islam to block the means (*sadd al-dharīᶜa*) towards associationism (*shirk*), while the Companions were still new converts. Although he accepts this was lifted later, al-Āqḥiṣārī says that it can be reintroduced if circumstances once more dictate the need for prohibition (*Majlis XVII*, f. 51v).

become self-deceived while travelling the spiritual path. The shaykh is the nexus between the disciple and the spiritual world, as well as between the disciple and the souls of past masters and Prophets. Above all, the shaykh is the nexus between the disciple and God. We see in al-Āqḥiṣārī's writing a form of Sufism which in many respects echoes the traditions of many of the popular orders that enjoyed significant representation in Muslim history.

The attempt to position al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Majālis* and *Risāla fī-l-sulūk* within the context of the existing orders of the time has demanded more. Though, ultimately, his conceptualisation does not fit as a glove to a hand with any particular order of his age, the survey of Naqshbandī Sufism above has allowed us to see the extent to which al-Āqḥiṣārī's understanding of the spiritual path is aligned with the order. It is perhaps inevitable this would be so, given both the firm roots of the order within Ottoman society since as early as the 15th century, and the orthodoxy which it claimed for itself through its emphasis on the Sharīᶜah. In all, it is difficult not to assume that al-Āqḥiṣārī's emphasis on the silent *dhikr,* the *rābiṭa,* the status and role of the shaykh, the necessity of the shaykh being perfect (*kāmil*)—and in contrast, his opposition to the visitation of shrines, the belief in the finality of sainthood (*khatm al-wilāya*), and various extra-scriptural devotional practices—were not in some way informed by Naqshbandī mysticism. Notwithstanding this, there is one inescapable truth: at no point does al-Āqḥiṣārī mention the Naqshbandī order explicitly, or cite any of the well-known Naqshbandī masters, or indeed admit to any personal affiliation with the order. The only possible explanation is

that he was attempting some sort of reform of Sufism. This hypothesis will be explored further in the final chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: INNOVATION (*BID*^{c}*A*)

This chapter seeks to investigate the philosophical underpinnings of Qāḍīzādeli opposition to innovations (*bid*^{c}*a*), to position them on the ideological spectrum so as to understand which traditions they drew from for their conceptualisation, and also to demonstrate, by a process of both elimination and comparative textual analysis, the nature of the connection between the movement and the Damascene Shaykh al-Islam, Ibn Taymiyya.

A Complex Discussion

The tension between tradition and innovation is one that is hardly unique to the history of Islam. Since it is in part a tension which develops because of religion's natural predilection for the past (usually a specific point in the past) over the present and future, this dialectic is ubiquitous, observable within all religious traditions. At its root is a concern for how closely the beliefs and practices of a believing community, in any given point in its development, are in line with the vision of the religion's founder, and even the earliest practitioners—such is the dynamic it takes within Islam at least. Often connected with this tension are the emerging revivalist movements, which assume the task of forcefully steering the community back to some sort of primordial authenticity it has supposedly lost.

In the context of Islamic intellectual history, this tension manifests itself in a very particular way. After the fall of the Mu^{c}tazilites, during the early Abbāsid period, legalists (*fuqahā^{c}*) took over the reins of religious authority from theologians (*mutakallimūn*), acquiring with this new position the power to define and determine what Islam is. Whereas theologians had been more concerned with delineating doctrinal orthodoxy and heresy, the jurists spent most of their efforts on delineating correct practice, or orthopraxy, from incorrect practice. They were therefore less interested in doctrinal heresies, though admittedly ritual practice and theological doctrines were sometimes entangled.[220]Thus the language which evolved to describe heretical practices, and also beliefs (but only as an extension of the first), came about in an intellectual milieu dominated by jurists.

The origin of the most important term used by both jurists and theologians to describe heresy was *bid^{c}a* (innovation), a term traceable to the Qur'an.[221] The debate over innovation might never have been contested had the Prophet himself not counselled his community to emulate his example, while at the same time exhorting them to scrupulously avoid departing from it. According to a tradition in the *ḥadīth* collection of Muslim, the Prophet would preamble every sermon of his with a warning about the perils

[220] On the rise to prominence of the jurists in the wake of the so-called "fall" of the Mu^{c}tazilites, see J. Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[221] With the appearance of the concept of the Prophetic Way (*sunnat al-nabī*), which indicated the tradition of the Prophet which he himself sanctioned—either verbally, practically or by tacit approval—the term *bid^{c}a* came into usage as a contradistinction. For more on the early development of the term *sunna*, refer to J. Schacht, 'Sur l'expression "*Sunna* du Prophete"', *Melanges d'Orientalisme offerts a Henri Masse* (Tehran, 1963), pp. 361-365; G.H.A. Juynboll, 'Muslim's Introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ* translated and annotated with an excursus on the chronology of *fitna* and *bid^{c}a*', *JSAI,* 5 (1984), 263-311 and 'Some new ideas on the development of *sunna* as a technical term in early Islam', *JSAI,* 10 (1987), 97-118.

of inventing (*iḥdāth*) new matters in religion.[222] In *Majlis XVIII*, al-Āqḥiṣārī quotes two Prophetic traditions, the first, ‘Every innovation (*bidᶜa*) is misguidance,’ and the second, which does not explicitly make use of the term *bidᶜa*, but does mention the term *muḥdath* (invention), ‘Whoever invents something in this matter of ours (i.e. religion) which is not from it shall have it rejected.’[223]

Whereas the Prophet’s language was simple, the notion of “inventing religion” was possibly obfuscated in the period of the second caliph, ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 43/644). We are told that, one day after observing the performance of the *tarāwīḥ* prayer in congregation, something which the Prophet did not himself encourage, ᶜUmar exclaimed, ‘What an excellent innovation it is!’ (*niᶜmat al-bidᶜa hiya*).[224] This statement would serve jurists in posterity, who could invoke the authority of ᶜUmar in order to justify a typology of innovations, ranging from praiseworthy (*ḥasana*) to blameworthy (*sayyi’a*). Since, in the view of Sunnī Islam, ᶜUmar had been invested with legal authority by the Prophet himself—the Prophet is believed to have commanded his community to follow his Way

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[222] In the tradition related by Jābir, whenever addressing the people, the Prophet’s eyes would redden, he would raise his tone and his anger would become severe till it was as though he was warning an army. He would then, in his opening address, warn that every innovation (*bidᶜa*) is pernicious. See Muslim, 4: 1885.

[223] Al-Jurjānī in his *Taᶜrīfāt* says that ‘*ibtidāᶜ* is the creation of a thing unprecedented in material and time, such as the intellect. It is the opposite of composition (*takwīn*), which is preceded by material substance, and *iḥdāth,* preceded by time (p. 11).

[224] Al-Bukhārī, XXXII, 227. The tradition is also collected in Mālik’s *Muwaṭṭa’* and is quoted in full here: ‘Mālik related from Ibn Shihāb from ᶜUrwa b. al-Zubayr that ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Abd al-Qārī’ said, “I went out to the mosque with ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb in Ramadan and the people there were spread out in groups. Some men were praying by themselves, while others were praying in small groups. ᶜUmar said, ‘By Allah! It would be better in my opinion if these people gathered behind one reciter.’ So he gathered them behind Ubayy b. Kaᶜb. Then I went out with him on a second night and the people were praying behind their Qur’an reciter. ᶜUmar said, ‘How excellent this new way is (*niᶜmat al-bidᶜa hādhihi*), but what you miss while you are asleep is better than what you watch in prayer.’ He meant the end of the night, and people used to watch the beginning of the night in prayer.”’ *Al-Muwatta. Imam Malik,* trans. A.A.at-Tarjumana and Y. Johnson (Norwich: Diwan Press, 1982), pp. 47-48.

(*Sunna*) as well as the way of the 'Rightly-Guided' Caliphs after him[225]—these same jurists argued that the Prophet's *ḥadīth* on *bidᶜa* was qualified (*mukhaṣṣaṣ*) by the specificity introduced by ᶜUmar's precedent.

Bidᶜa would thus become a contested term and concept in the history of Islamic thought, with few books of law and ethics ignoring it. Those which treated the subject as a principal theme did so as part of a perennial reformist current in Islam, often aiming to curb perceived societal maladies. Generally, anti-*bidᶜa* literature is characterised by its adoption of a critical stance on all traditions, customs, behaviours and aspects of communal engagement which have no direct association with the life of the Prophet or his early community, yet are believed by those who enact them to be *qurubāt*—that is, actions which bring one nearer to God. Since the time of Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiᶜī (d. 204/820), in particular, it would be the reported statements of the Prophet which Sunnī Muslims would use in order to distinguish *Sunna* from *bidᶜa*.[226]

Bidᶜa: A Clarification

It is important to clarify a rudimentary yet rather commonly made error. Studies on *bidᶜa* which fail to analyse the concept and its employment through the lens of Muslim legal theory risk failing to appreciate the precision with which jurists have understood the term.

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[225] Abū Dāwūd, XXXX, 4590, al-Tirmidhī, 2676.

[226] For al-Shāfiᶜī's role in securing for the Prophetic *hadīth* unique priority after the Qur'an as a source of law, refer to J. Schacht, *The Origin's of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), Chapt. 2 and 3; F. Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); and Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiᶜī, *Risāla: Treatise on the Foundations of Islamic Jurisprudence,* trans. Majid Khadduri (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1987).

It is clear that in some cases the problem has arisen from oversight—failing to grasp the semantic and legal connotations of the word. No doubt the seemingly arbitrary ways in which the term is defined and employed can be a hindrance to understanding. Whatever the case is, there is a palpable misreading of Islamic legal texts which deal with *bid^c^a* in more than a few studies on this.[227]

Though the term *bid^c^a* has been used discursively through the centuries, there is at least some level of agreement among Muslim jurists about the broad ambit of the term. For the majority, *bid^c^a* is employed in the legal (*shar^c^ī*) context to refer to those ritual practices and doctrines that cannot be justified in some way by recourse to the foundational texts of Islam. Social practices and customary usage which have no bearing on religion per se do not usually fall within the scope of the term, even when it might appear that issues which have been classed as *bid^c^a* ostensibly appear to be from the genus of day-to-day social transactions. In view of the complexities involved, it is useful to develop a clearer understanding of the term *bid^c^a.*

[227] For example, M. Fierro takes for granted the view that *bid^c^a* is applied to both religious and social practice in, 'The Treatises against Innovations,' *Der Islam,* 69 (1992), pp. 204-246. See also B. Lewis, 'Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam,' *Studia Islamica,* 1 (1953), pp. 43-63; M. Talbi, 'Les Bid^c^a,' *Studia Islamica,* 12 (1960), pp. 43-77; J.P.Berkey, 'Tradition, Innovation and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Near East,' *Past and Present,* 146 (1995), pp. 38-65; V. Rispler, 'Towards a New Understanding of the Term *Bid^c^a*,' *Der Islam,* 68 (1991). In Berkey, the term *bid^c^a* is translated as "custom". It is noteworthy that none of the aforementioned studies attempts to understand juristic conceptualisations of *bid^c^a.*

The Qur’an, the primary source of legislation in Islam,[228] has something to say about innovation in the chapter *Al-ḥadīd.* The context, at least according to Muslim commentators, is that a group of Christians were rebuked for having introduced the practice of monasticism into Christianity. In the verse, the eighth form perfect of the infinitive *bid*ᶜ*a* occurs. It is emboldened in the text below:

ثُم قَفَّيْنَا عَلَى آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً **<u>ابْتَدَعُوهَا</u>** مَاكَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاء رِضْوَانِ اللهِ فَمَارَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا فَآتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ

Then, in their wake, We followed them up with (others of) Our apostles: We sent after them Jesus the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel; and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy. But the Monasticism which they **<u>invented</u>** for themselves, We did not prescribe for them: (We commanded) only the seeking for the good pleasure of God. But that they did not foster as they should have done. Yet We bestowed, on those among them who believed, their (due) reward, but many of them are rebellious transgressors. (Q.57:27)

[228] The extent to which the Qur’an has informed Muslim law in practice is an interesting question, especially since the strictly legal content of the Qur’an is rather thin. It helps to explain why *ḥadīth* is so important to Muslim jurists as are the pragmatic principles of the legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), particularly ᶜ*urf*, ᶜ*āda* and *maṣlaḥa.* For more on this discussion, see W. Hallaq, *Introduction to Islamic Law* and Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

Commentators and jurists have argued on the basis of this verse that God alone has legislative authority on matters of ritual and religious practice.[229] Importantly, this verse, which is the only one in the Qur'an where this verbal form occurs, censures the guilty party for their innovating in matters of religious practice only, and not in other spheres of human activity. Similarly, Prophetic Traditions that warn against innovations make it clear that it is only those accretions into religious practice that are blameworthy, and not innovation in the broader sense. Al-Āqḥiṣārī's cites two *ḥadīth* in the *Majālis*:

> The Messenger of God, prayers and peace of God be upon him, said "To proceed: indeed the best of speech is the Book of God, the Exalted, and the best of guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad and the worst of affairs are its inventions, every invention is an innovation, and every innovation is misguidance." In another *ḥadīth,* narrated by ᶜIrbāḍ b. Sāriya, he, upon him be peace, said, "Whoever amongst you lives after me shall see much discord; so you should cling to my way (*sunna*) and the way (*sunna*) of the well-guided caliphs. Cling to it and hold on to it with your molars. Beware of matters invented, since every invention is an innovation, and every innovation is misguidance."[230]

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[229] See for example al-Ṭabarī's, *Jāmiᶜ al-bayān ᶜan ta'wīl 'āy al-Qur'ān: Taqrīb wa Tahdhīb li Imām al-mufassirīn wa l-mu'arrikhīn, Abū Jaᶜfar* Muḥammad *b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī,* abridged and annotated by S. Khālidī (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1997), 7: 239-240. There are alternative readings of this verse; perhaps most famous is that of the Muᶜtazilite jurist and exegete, Jār Allāh Maḥmūd b. ᶜUmar al-Zamakhsharī (d. 537-6/1143-4). On the basis of his commentary, an English rendition of the verse might read as follows: 'Then, in their wake, We followed them up with (others of) Our apostles: We sent after them Jesus the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel; and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him compassion, mercy and monasticism, which they invented. We did not prescribe this [monasticism] for them except as a means for them to seek the good pleasure of God. But some did not foster it as they should have done. Yet We bestowed, on those among them who believed, their (due) reward, but many of them are rebellious transgressors.' For Zamakhsharī, a positive reading of monasticism would absolve God from having inspired a sinful act to people, a deduction which might be made on the basis of al-Ṭabarī's reading above. See al-Zamakhsharī's *Tafsīr al-Kashhāf ᶜan ḥaqā'iq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl wa ᶜuyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta'wīl* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ᶜilmiyya, 1995), 4: 468-469.

[230] Al-Āqḥiṣārī, *Majlis XVIII,* f. 53r. For the definition of *Sunna,* see W. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunnī 'Uṣūl al-fiqh* (Cambridge: University Press, 1999), p. 194.

It is informative for our purposes to briefly examine Abū Isḥāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 789/1388), the 8th/14th century Andalucian legal theoretician who was one of the few Muslim jurists to formulate a working definition of *bidᶜa*. He penned *al-Iᶜtiṣām—The Refuge*, for the purposes of explaining the problem of innovation, and, although unusual within the anti-*bidᶜa* literature in terms of the analytical depth, it indicates just how nuanced the juristic usage of the term can be:

> It is well-established in legal theory (*ᶜilm al-uṣūl*) that judgements (*aḥkām*) relating to the actions and statements of servants (*ᶜibād*) are of three types: *1)* A ruling which necessitates the meaning of a command (*amr*), whether it be obligatory (*wājib*) or recommended (*mandūb*); *2)* A ruling which necessitates the meaning of prohibition (*nahy*), whether it be reprehensible (*makrūh*) or proscribed (*ḥarām*); and *3)* a ruling which necessitates permission (*ibāḥa*). Thus the actions and statements of servants are limited to the following three types: *1)* a required act; *2)* an act whose avoidance is obligatory; *3)* an act permissible to either undertake or leave. That which must be avoided conflicts with the two former types and is of two sub-categories: either it must be avoided, and [therefore] prohibited, because it is a special contravention (*mukhālafa khāṣṣa*), irrespective of anything else. If it is prohibited, the action is designated a sin (*maᶜṣiya*), and the one who carries it out is designated a sinner (*āthim*); orit must be avoided, and [therefore] prohibited, because it conflicts with manifest legislation (*ẓāhir al-tashrīᶜ*), insofar as [it involves] applying restrictions (*ḍarb al-ḥudūd*), specifying certain modalities (*kayfiyyāt*), observing specific postures (*hay'a muᶜayyina*) or specific times, [in a manner] which is permanent.[231] [This latter kind] is the invention of something new (*ibtidāᶜ*)—an innovation (*bidᶜa*). The one who does it is designated an innovator (*mubtadiᶜ*).
>
> Building upon the above, *bidᶜa* is a [term] expressing, 'an invented path in religion, which runs parallel (*tuḍāḥī*) to the Law (*sharīᶜa*), and is undertaken with the intention of exaggerating (*mubālagha*) the worship (*taᶜabbud*) of God, the Sublime.' This is the definition according to those who do not include customs (*ᶜādāt*) within the scope of *bidᶜa* because they prefer to limit

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[231] Examples for each of these modalities of *bid'ā* are provided by al-Shāṭibī later in his book. An applied restriction might be when someone vows to fast while and to stand for the duration of his fast; a specified modality might be perform communal *dhikr* with a single voice; and an appointed time might be to make a celebration out of the birthday of the Prophet (*al-Iᶜtiṣām,* p.31).

> its scope to acts of worship (^{c}*ibādāt*) [...] Based on this definition, if what is invented is something which relates to daily life, such as innovations in industry or building, then such a thing would not be labelled a *bid^{c}a*. [232]

Works which might be classified within the corpus of anti-*bid^{c}a* literature do not often provide a definition of *bid^{c}a* or even a clear statement on its ambit—they merely assume knowledge of the criteria being used to separate legitimate religion from invented religion.[233] In this respect, al-Shāṭibī's formulation of a definition, based on the work of various contributors to the anti-*bid^{c}a* literature, is unique. It would not be surprising if he was aware of the acute problem created by jurists before him—and most particularly his Mālikī predecessors, such Ibn WaḍḍāṬ ,ḥurṭūshī and Ibn al-Ḥājj—of failing to define clearly the parameters of their inquiry. Notwithstanding this, it is not difficult to infer from the many examples of innovations listed in the anti-*bid^{c}a*, that each is associated either directly or indirectly to a religious practice or doctrinal question.

Majālis al-abrār *and the anti-*Bid^{c}a *Corpus*

Al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Majālis al-abrār* should be looked at as both a work that stands within a long tradition of writings on *bid^{c}a* and one of several key texts from the sixteenth and

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[232] Abū Isḥāq al-Shāṭibī, *al-I'tiṣām* (Beirut: Maktabat al-^{c}āriyya, 2002), p. 29. Al-Āqḥiṣārī is equally clear, excluding custom from the scope of *bid^{c}a*. He says, '[The term *innovation*] in the two traditions, though general, incorporates all forms of invention. However, its generality is not according to its wider linguistic implication, but rather its specific legal implication. Hence it does not include customs in the first instance, but instead is restricted to certain creedal issues and modalities of worship.

[233] See next section for a list of these.

seventeenth centuries that were connected with the Qāḍīzādeli movement.[234] Among Ottoman contributors to the anti-*bid*^{c}*a* literature was Birgili, who presented his conceptualisation in *al-Ṭarīqat al-Muḥammadiyya*, and Qāḍīzāde, who wrote *Qāmi*^{c}*at al-bid*^{c}*a Nāṣirat al-Sunna, Dāmighāt al-mubtadi*^{c}*a*[235] and the *Risāleh*.[236] The latter also wrote a chapter on the subject in his *Irshād al-*^{c}*uqūl*.[237] Works within this tradition are known as the "treatises against innovation" (*kutub al-bida*^{c}), a genre which became independent of the *ḥadīth* literature as early as the 3rd Islamic century.[238] In order to locate al-Āqḥiṣārī more precisely within this tradition, and in order to identify his intellectual source, it is useful to begin with a survey of the variant ways in which the term *bid*^{c}*a* has been categorised. This is since al-Āqḥiṣārī, rather unusually for a scholar of his time, did not see any justification for a typology of *bid*^{c}*a.*

Writings against *bid*^{c}*a* can be found in several Islamic literary genres, including jurisprudence (*fiqh*), heresiography (*al-milal wa l-niḥal*), the professions of faith (^{c}*aqā'id*), treatises on "enjoining public good" (*ḥisba*) and fatwa collections. These are to be counted along with the so-called *kutub al-bida*^{c}, which are discussed further here. The following titles are of some of the most well-known works from this corpus; their authors each considered the problem of *bid*^{c}*a* a pressing enough issue as to warrant independent

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[234] See *Majlis XVIII, XIX, XX, XXIV, XXXII, XXXVII, XXXIX* and passim for views on *bid*^{c}*a*.

[235] Qāḍīzāde, *Qāmi*^{c}*at al-bid*^{c}*a,* Suleymaniye Library, MS. *Birinci Serez 3876*, f. I.

[236] *Risāle-i Qāḍīzāde.* See especially, ff. 87v-r.

[237] Qāḍīzāde, *Irshād al-*^{c}*uqūl,* Chapter II, f. 124v.

[238] See M. Fierro, 'The Treatises against Innovations (*Kutub al-bida*^{c}),' *Der Islam,* no. 69 (1992), pp. 204-246 and V. Rispler, 'Towards a New Understanding of the Term *Bid*^{c}*a,*' *Der Islam,* no. 68 (1991), p. 323.

writing. The list includes only those works penned before the 11th/17th century, since the aim is to locate al-Āqḥiṣārī's source:

1) The Mālikī Abū ^{c}Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Waḍḍāḥ al-Qurṭubī (d. 286/900), *Kitāb al-bida^{c}*;
2) The Mālikī Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Walīd b. Randaqa al-Ṭurṭūshī (d. 519/1126), *Kitāb al-ḥawādith wa-l-bida^{c}*;
3) The Ḥanbalī Abū l-Faraj ^{c}Abd al-Raḥmān b. ^{c}Alī b. al-Jawzī (d. 596/1200), *Talbīs Iblīs*;
4) The Ḥanbalī Abū ^{c}Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ^{c}Abd al-Wāḥid al-Maqdisī (d. 642/1245), *Ittibā^{c} al-sunan wa ijtināb al-bida^{c}*;
5) The Shāfi^{c}ī Abū Shāma, Abū l-Qāsim ^{c}Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ismā^{c}īl (d. c. 666/1268);
6) The Ḥanbalī Aḥmad b. Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), *Kitāb iqtidā' al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm, mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm*;
7) The Mālikī Abū ^{c}Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥājj al-^{c}Abdarī al-Fāsī (d. 736/1336);
8) The Mālikī Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā al-Lakhmī al-Shāṭibī (d. 789/1388), *Kitāb al-I^{c}tiṣām*;
9) The Ḥanafī Ṣāfī al-Dīn Idrīs b. Baydakīn b. ^{c}Abd Allāh al-Turkmānī (8th-9th/14th-15th century), *al-Luma^{c} fi-l-ḥawādith wa-l-bida^{c}*;
10) The Mālikī Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Aḥmad al-Burnūsī Zarrūq al-Fāsī (d. 899/1494), *^{c}Uddat al-murīd al-ṣādiq/al-Bida^{c} wa-l-ḥawādith*;

11) The Shāfiᶜī Abū l-Faḍl ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abū Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 910/1505), *al-Amr bi-l-ittibāᶜ wa-l-nahy ᶜan al-ibtidāᶜ*.[239]

All of the above mentioned works, with the important exceptions of the *Talbīs* and the *Iqtidā',* divide *bidᶜa* into at least two types. The following table, reproduced from V. Rispler with several additions of my own, shows the various ways that scholars have classified *bidᶜa*.[240]

Jurist	Date of Death	The Classification of *bidᶜa*	Legal Affiliation
Al-Shāfiᶜī	204/820	*bidᶜa munkara* *bidᶜa ḍalāla* *bidᶜa maḥmūda ≠ madhmūma*	
Al-Ṭurṭūshī	510/1126 or 525/1131	*bidᶜa muḥarrama* *makrūha* *wājiba* *bidᶜa munkara*	Mālikī
Ibn al-Jawzī	596/1200	*bidᶜa* in ritual practice is *ḥarām*	Ḥanbalī

[239] For full references of these works, and the translations that have been produced for some of them, refer to M. Fierro, *The Treatises against innovations.*

[240] V. Rispler, 'Toward a New Understanding of the Term bid'a', p. 324.

cIzz al-Dīn b. cAbd al-Salām	666/1262	*ḥarām—makrūh—mubāḥ—mandūb—wājib*	Shāficī
Abū Shāma	662/1266	(*ḥasana*) *mustaḥsana* ≠ *mustaqbaḥa* *muḥarram makrūh*	Shāficī
Al-Nawawī	676/1277	*ḥasana* ≠ *qabīḥa*	Shāficī
Al-Turkmānī	$7^{th}/13^{th}$	*mubāḥa—yuthāb calayhā—makrūha—muḥarrama—mustaḥsana* ≠ *mustaqbaḥa*	Ḥanafī
Ibn Taymiyya	728/1328	*bidca luhgawiyya* ≠ *bidca sharciyya*	Ḥanbalī
Ibn al-Ḥājj al-cAbdarī	737/1366	*wājib—mandūb—mubāh—makrūh—ḥarām*	Mālikī
Al-Shāṭibī	790/1388	*bidca ḥaqīqiyya* ≠ *iḍāfiyya* *ṣaghīra* ≠ *kabīra*	Mālikī
Ibn Rajab	794/1392	*bidca la-hā aṣl* ≠ *bidca lā aṣl lahā*	Ḥanbalī
Al-Suyūṭī	911/1505	Mentions all the classifications of al-Shāficī and others from his school	Shāficī

Al-Shāficī is widely considered to be the first Muslim scholar to have written a complete treatise on *uṣūl al-fiqh*[241] and is also likely to have been the earliest to formulate a

[241] For an alternative perspective on this popular view, see the first chapter of Schacht's, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

justification for dividing *bid^c^a* into two types—the objectionable (*madhmūm*) and the unobjectionable (*ghayr madhmūm*).[242] Others considered *bid^c^a* to be of more categories than two, for example the al-^c^Izz b. ^c^Abd al-Salām (d. 660/1262),[243] who formulated a five-fold typology replicating the better-known five-fold typology of legal norms.[244] Ibn ʻAbd al-Salām's typology was accepted widely by later Shāfi^c^ī jurists, as well as by scholars of other *madhhabs,* such as the Ḥanafī jurist al-Turkmānī.[245]

Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Taymiyya, both Ḥanbalī jurists, completely rejected the notion that *bid^c^a* in matters of religion might be conceived of positively. This said, and despite the influence that these two scholars had on the Ḥanbalī school,[246] they did not represent every affiliate of the Ḥanbalī school, as has been claimed.[247] Ibn Rajab (d. 794/1392) is one such Ḥanbalī who adopted an alternative position, made clear in his *Jāmi^c^ al-^c^ulūm wa l-ḥikam,* a commentary on al-Nawawī's compilation of forty *ḥadīth.* For Ibn Rajab, newly invented religious practices are acceptable with the proviso that they have a "basis" (*aṣl*) in religion: 'The *ḥadīth* [whoever invents something in our affair which is not from it, it shall be shall be rejected] makes an explicit (*manṭūq*) statement, namely that every [innovative] action which is not validated by the Law (*shar^c^*) is to be rejected; [there] is an implicit (*mafhūm*) statement, namely that every [innovative] action which

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[242] Al-Shāfiʻī is cited by Abū Shāma, *al-Bā^c^ith,* p. 23.

[243] See his *Qawā^c^id al-aḥkām*.

[244] The five categories of *ḥukm* according to the legal schools (the Ḥanafīs have a typology of seven) are: obligation (*wujūb*), recommendation (*istiḥbāb*), permission (*ibāḥa*), detestation (*karāha*) and prohibition (*taḥrīm*). See W. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories,* pp. 40-41.

[245] See *al-Luma^c^*.

[246] There is a debate over Ibn Taymiyya's legal affiliation and whether he should indeed be considered a Ḥanbalī. For this, see A.H. Matroudi, *The Ḥanbalī School of Law and Ibn Taymiyya: Conflict or Conciliation* (London: Routledge, 2006).

[247] See for example the assertion of V. Rispler, *A New Understanding,* p. 325.

does have a source (*aṣl*) in the religion is not to be rejected.'[248] The truth is that the positions of Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Taymiyya on *bidᶜa* were radically different to most, if not all, jurists and theologians of the classical period.

The Theoretical Dimensions of the Bidᶜa *Debate*

Too often the philosophical underpinnings of the anti-*bidᶜa* position are overlooked in the scholarly literature. Yet an inquiry into this is central to understanding how Muslim jurists employ the term in legal discourse. The assumption that *bidᶜa* in Muslim jurisprudential usage encompasses all kinds of innovation, both religious and customary, finds no correspondence in the legal literature.[249] Furthermore, various hypotheses have been put forward to explain the preoccupation jurists had with *bidᶜa.* These include the desire to monopolise the transmission of sacred knowledge, the protection of the authority of the ᶜulamā' and the deep fear of the widespread public transmission of the word of God.[250] Though these may account for some instances, they cannot do so for all since clearly not every scholar was motivated by shrewd political motivations.

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[248] Ibn Rajab, *Jāmiᶜ al-ᶜulūm wa l-ḥikam* (Amman: Dār al-Furqān, 1990), p. 77.

[249] Ibn Taymiyya makes it very clear that only innovations of a *sharᶜī* kind should be considered pernicious, not those of a social or technological kind: 'Clearly the Prophet did not intend by his words, "every innovation is error", every act that was to be done for the first time, because even Islam—nay, every religion brought by a prophet—is a wholly new act. He rather intended those new acts which he had not himself laid down.' See Memon, *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle against Popular Religion* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), p. 235.

[250] These are some of the reasons that J.P. Berkey provides in his analysis of *bidᶜa* in Muslim discourse. See 'Tradition, Innovation and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Near East,' *Past and Present,* 146 (1995), pp. 38-65.

Perhaps the most useful source for ascertaining a more nuanced understanding of the anti-*bid^c^a* position is *Iqtidā' al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm—Adhering to the Straight Path* of Ibn Taymiyya. Written by a scholar unsurpassed in his ability to articulate the theological bases underpinning the prohibition of "inventing religion", the *Iqtidā'* fits neatly within the anti-*bid^c^a* corpus. This said, it is clearly distinguished by the analytical depth to which its author probed the subject. M. Umar Memon says,

> What is remarkable is that in the scaffolding of this theoretical structure Ibn Taymiyya strained all the resources of his imaginative mind. He not only employed the traditional sources of knowledge such as the Koran and *Sunna* but also fully exploited another less orthodox avenue of cognizance, viz., logic, reason. More than once he ingeniously shows how these practices, and arguments upholding them, cannot be sustained in the light of reason.[251]

Memon does not elaborate upon his observation lending the opportunity here to reflect on the arguments proffered by Ibn Taymiyya to justify his condemnation of *bid^c^a* and, by extension, an opportunity to speculate on why later scholar-activists such as al-Āqḥiṣāri had such reverence for Ibn Taymiyya's work.

Ibn Taymiyya opined that people invent ritual practices and participate in them because they are incapable of finding spiritual contentment in adhering solely to the Qur'an and

[251] Memon, *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle,* p. 6.

the *Sunna*, and/or because they are too arrogant to submit themselves to the divine command.[252] For Ibn Taymiyya, it is a malady of the heart that steers a person to innovate in religion. He explains this in terms of the three social classes: amīrs, ᶜulamā' and the simple-pious. Each is driven to inaugurate newly invented religious practices because of their own failure to adhere to the precepts of the divine law. The innovations of the amīrs include the "cruel laws" which they promulgate, such as the non-*Sharᶜī* fines and taxes; these stem from their neglect to "enjoin the good and forbid the evil". If they demanded only what was legally sanctioned and, thereafter, distributed it in accordance with divine law, seeking thereby to consolidate God's religion rather than themselves—if they exacted punishments on the elite as well as the less fortunate, seeking to instill in people thereby a mindful awareness of God—they would have had no need to expropriate the wealth of their people.[253] As for the ᶜulamā', had they adhered to the Qur'an and the *Sunna,* they would have found all that they need of useful knowledge. They would not have fallen into the errors of the theologians or the speculations of the jurists, each of whom is led from one unreliable judgment to another.[254] As for the simple-pious, had they worshipped their Lord through the words and deeds which He revealed to them, they would have reached the spiritual stations to which they aspire. They would not have been compelled to replace the recitation of the Qur'an with listening to musical instruments or to substitute Prophetic invocations with invented litanies.[255]

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[252] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā' al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm, mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm,* edited by ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Hindāwī (Beirut: Maktabat al-'aṣriyya, 2003), p. 292.

[253] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā',* p. 281.

[254] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā',* pp. 281-282.

[255] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā'.* pp. 281 – 282.

Ibn Taymiyya accepted that some of those who indulge in innovated religious practices can experience spiritual benefits. He saw this as inevitable because, for him, every innovation is an extension of a valid religious practice, such as meditation, fasting or prayer. Some innovations may even result from erroneous juristic interpretations (*ijtihād*) of Scripture. According to Ibn Taymiyya, people who innovate in religion because of an *ijtihād* will be rewarded for those aspects of the new act that have a legally valid foundation and forgiven for those elements which might be considered in the strict sense *bid^{c}a.*[256] Lest he be accused of sanctioning the invention of religion, Ibn Taymiyya remarks that the "good" elements that make up any act that is *bid^{c}a* are outweighed by the "evil" elements (*al-ithm akbar min al-naf'*);[257] any act in which the evil is preponderant over the good is *ipso facto* prohibited by the Sharī^{c}a. Assessment of the harms and benefits of any single act requires a perceptive mind and a solid foundation in religious knowledge; as such, the masses are entreated by Ibn Taymiyya to cling stubbornly to the Qur'an and the *Sunna* rather than draw close to *bid^{c}a.*[258]

Ibn Taymiyya puts forward interesting rational arguments alongside scriptural proofs to support his view that innovations are harmful. Some of these are applicable to all innovations, others are more specific. He points out that innovations are "derivates of

[256] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā',* p. 290.

[257] Here he alludes to Q.2.219, in which alcohol and gambling are considered prohibited because the evil in them is preponderant over the benefit.

[258] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā',* p. 290.

disbelief' (*mushtaqq min al-kufr*): each one in some way directs people away from the worship of God alone and from following the *Sunna.*[259] Every newly invented religious practice supplants a sanctioned rite of worship. If *bid*ᶜ*a* is allowed to proliferate without curtailment, the result will be the complete corruption and distortion of Islam which, according to Ibn Taymiyya, has been the fate of Christianity and Judaism.[260]

Since many religious practices which are considered *bid*ᶜ*a* are not pure inventions but often the adaptation and integration of foreign rites into Islam, Ibn Taymiyya occupies himself in the *Iqtidā'* with the concept of assimilation and imitation (*al-tashabbuh wal-taqlīd*). He opines that the idea of dissimilarity or differentiation of the believer from the non-believer is one of the central objectives of revelation. This rationalisation is unique in Muslim jurisprudential theory. In the following passage Ibn Taymiyya explains the theoretical basis for one of the most controversial debates in Islamic law:

> [God] enjoined the Prophet to differ from [the disbelievers] in his way of life, even though to many their harm was not evident, and that for a number of reasons some of which are:
>
> 1. Participation in conduct breeds homogeneity and resemblance in the participants, which leads to accord in morals and deeds. And this is evident. Thus, for instance, one who dons himself in the vesture of the learned feels a certain affinity with them, or, for instance, one who wears the outfit of the fighting soldiers finds in himself an affinity with the latter's character, and unless an obstacle comes in his way his nature conforms to that character.
> 2. Difference in conduct brings out dissimilarity and separation which has the effect of fending off divine wrath and prevents going astray […] The more man's inner life is perfect and the more he understands Islam, true Islam—not

[259] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā',* p. 289.

[260] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā'*, p. 289.

mere outward parading as a Muslim, nor blindly following mere traditional beliefs as a whole—the greater is his urge to differ both internally and externally from the Jews and Christians, and the stronger is his urge to keep his distance from their characteristics.

3. Finally, a common way of life promotes social interaction to an extent that distinction between the right-guided on the one hand and the God-displeasing and gone-astray on the other vanishes.[261]

It can be seen clearly that in Ibn Taymiyya's estimation *bid^c^a* is a corrupting force that threatens the very foundations of Islam. Does any of the deeper rationality which led Ibn Taymiyya to his oppositional stance on *bid^c^a,* and that is so characteristic of the *Iqtidā',* manifest itself in Birgili, al-Āqḥiṣārī or even Qāḍīzāde? Birgili is unambivalent when he asserts that the root cause of dogmatic heresies and innovations in religious practice are but an attempt to satisfy egoistical desire.[262] We have already seen this in the *Iqtidā'*, where Ibn Taymiyya asserted the arrogance of those who struggle to subjugate themselves to the precepts of the Qur'an and the *Sunna,* as well as the spiritual weakness in such people, which hinders them from finding contentment in the religion taught by the Prophet. Both Birgili and Ibn Taymiyya are criticising certain Sufis first of all, who for them were the most likely to invent new forms of worship. Akin to Ibn Taymiyya, Birgili considers that the evil of abandoning a legally established ritual is less destructive to one's religion than the evil which accompanies the invention of new ritual practices. This is since a proliferation of the latter will ultimately result in the corruption of the religion.[263]

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[261] Memon, *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle,* pp. 97-98.

[262] Birgili, *The Path of Muhammad,* p. 72.

[263] Birgili, *The Path of Muhammad*, p. 73.

In al-Āqḥiṣārī's view the innovator (*mubtadi*^{c}) has a problem: his failure to recognise the perfection of the religion delivered by the Prophet. This failure drives him to inaugurate religious practices:

> *Bid*^{c}*a* is more evil than sinning since the person who enacts a *bid*^{c}*a* considers that the Prophet has been somehow deficient, though he may claim that he is extolling the Prophet by enacting it. This is since he is claiming that his *bid*^{c}*a* is better than the *Sunna* and more correct; he is challenging God and His Messenger by deeming good what the Law (*shar*^{c}) despises and what it prohibits, namely the invention of religion. God has legislated for His worshippers acts of worship which are sufficient for them and has perfected for them their religion, completing His favours upon them. He informs in His noble Book: 'This day I have perfected your religion for you, completing My favour upon you.' Hence [the maxim], 'augmenting the already perfected [renders it] deficient'. To do so is tantamount to having an extra finger. It is an established matter in legal theory (^{c}*ilm al-uṣūl*) that the righteous deed is known from evil deed, according to the true scholars, by recourse to the Law rather than to the intellect.[264]

In this passage al-Āqḥiṣārī reiterates the idea that innovation is more harmful than open disobedience since the first eventually becomes integrated within the religion through habit and custom, whereas the second remains a sin and therefore an act that people will seek to abandon eventually. These are yet again Taymiyyan ideas that are not original to al-Āqḥiṣārī.

[264] *Majlis XVIII*, ff. 55r-56v.

Qāḍīzāde's *Risāle* is distinct from the works of the two previous scholars inasmuch as he is far more concise, uses the vernacular and formulates rather simplistic rational arguments. These features may indicate that he had a wider audience in mind when composing his work. Notwithstanding this, he is determined to prove that innovations in ritual practice are a threat to the religion, and to its principal expositer, namely the *Sunna.* He seeks to prove in the following passage that, were a believer to occupy himself with just the acts of worship required of him by the *Sharīᶜa*, there would not be a moment of his day remaining for him to perform any of the invented ritual practices advocated by heterodox Sufis and others.

> The Morning Prayer is two cycles, the noon prayer four; the late afternoon prayer is four and the evening prayer three. The prayer at nightfall is four cycles. There are two for the Friday prayers. [Even] if one thousand cycles are performed voluntarily in the place of one of these prayers, they are of no value […] The *Sunna* prayers are also of two types. One is the strongly-recommended (*sunna mu'akkada*) prayer. His Excellency the Prophet always performed two cycles before the morning prayer, four before the noon prayer and two afterwards; two after the evening prayer and the same after the nightfall prayer. He performed four cycles before the Friday prayer and four afterwards; he never omitted to perform the wakening prayer. [There are] at least two and at most twenty cycles of the merely-recommended (*sunna ghayr mu'akkada*): two after the noon prayer, four before the late afternoon prayer, six after the evening prayer, twenty prayers of the "repenters" (*awwābīn*) after the main *awwābīn* prayer; then four cycles before the nightfall prayer and two afterwards; four cycles for the *tasbīḥ* prayer and two for the *shukr al-wuḍū'* prayer. There are two cycles for greeting the mosque and if in the course of one day and night one is present and enters the mosque five times, that makes twenty cycles.
>
> Performing every day and night the canonical obligation, the recommended and the *sunna* prayers totals one-hundred and thirty-four cycles. There are *sunna* prayers which are canonically done at certain times […] in total sixty four cycles. The obligatory and *sunna* prayers for Friday and the four required prayers for the two festivals total twenty four cycles. In total these

> 88 cycles plus the previously mentioned 134 together make 222 cycles of prayer […] for those brothers in faith who wish to worship and to draw near to God Almighty through prayer, what is necessary is that they should worship with the prayers which his Excellency the Prophet of God taught to the community. Let them not suppose that worship and drawing near occur by means of prayers which are innovation, popular custom and essentially lies and which have been fabricated [as if they were according to] the *Sharīᶜa*. This is not [true] worship. It is injurious.[265]

The survey above demonstrates that the Qāḍīzādelis were as prepared to support their arguments against innovation on rational grounds as they were on scriptural grounds. Ultimately, for the Ottoman revivalists, innovations present a threat to authentic religious practices, effectively vying for the believer's time and energy. The Qāḍīzādelis were not all willing to restrict themselves to mild exhortations and rationalisations, however. In al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Majālis,* as will be shown in the following chapter, one will find him openly inciting his audience to take personal responsibility for changing the status quo. This probably served as the precedent needed by the Qāḍīzādelis, who in their later evolution adopted a more violent campaign to uproot innovations they believed had become embedded in Ottoman society.

Taymiyyan Influences in the *Majālis*

Ibn Taymiyya is far more thorough in his treatment of *bidᶜa* than Ibn al-Jawzī. He is, in general, much more interested in treating the ramifications of innovations for the religion,

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[265] *Risāleh,* f.87r and f.87v.

and goes some way to describing specific forms that they can take. He speaks of *bid^c^a* in almost every major piece of writing; even a cursory database search for the term in the *Majmū^c^ al-fatāwā* is indicative of this—the number of occurrences exceeding two-hundred and thirty.[266] There are two significant works of Ibn Taymiyya composed on *bid^c^a* which he makes frequent reference to: the *Iqtidā' ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* and *Qā^c^idat al-sunna wa l-bid^c^a—The Formula [Distinguishing] the* Sunna *from Innovation.*[267] In the *Iqtidā',* he constructs a complex argument aiming to convince his reader that the *ḥadīths* concerning *bid^c^a* preclude the possibility of developing a juristic typology of the concept in any way that bears resemblance to the deontology of legal norms which developed in Islamic legal theory. He finds no justification for building an argument in support of a typology of *bid^c^a* on the basis of ^c^Umar's statement, *ni^c^mat al-bid^c^a,* whether that justification is sought in consensus or in customary usage. Those who do so are ignorant of the Sharī^c^a*,* as far as Ibn Taymiyya is concerned:

> Some people say that innovations are dividable in two types, the praiseworthy (*ḥasana*) and the reprehensible (*qabīḥa*). They deploy in support of their argument the statement of ^c^Umar, God be pleased with him, 'What an excellent innovation this is! (*ni^c^mat al-bid^c^a hādhihi*),' [said] regarding the *tarāwīḥ* prayer. They also deploy other statements and acts which, although appearing after the death of the Messenger of God, prayers and peace of God be upon him, were not reprehensible because of proofs indicating their praiseworthiness either from consensus (*ijmā^c^*) or analogical reasoning (*qiyās*). To these a man not grounded in the principles of knowledge (*uṣūl al-^c^ilm*) sometimes adds customs of the people, making these arguments for the merit of some innovations, either by making what he himself has grown

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[266] Database search results obtained from www.al-eman.com/Islamlib/viewtoc.asp?BID=252 [last accessed 05/08/2014].

[267] See, for example Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb ^c^ilm al-sulūk* in *Majmū^c^ al-fatāwā* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-^c^ilmiyya, 2000), 10: 194.

accustomed to a consensus (*ijmā*^{c}) (though he does not know the position of the rest of the Muslims concerning it), or because he loathes abandoning what he is accustomed to. He is of the status [of the people referred to] in the verse, 'And when it is said to them, "Come to what God has revealed and to the Messenger", they say, "What we find our ancestors following suffices us."' (Q.5.104). Often eminent men of learning and piety advance arguments that are out of keeping with those principles of knowledge upon which reliance is sought in matters of religion.[268]

The deeper logic which lies at the heart of Ibn Taymiyya's conceptualisation of *bid*^{c}*a* has been explored above. At this point, I am concerned with demonstrating the genealogy of ideas which connect al-Āqḥiṣārī and Ibn Taymiyya. A comparison of the *Iqtidā'* with al-Āqḥiṣārī's survey of *bid*^{c}*a* found in the eighteenth *Majlis* leaves little room for doubt that the Damascene theologian is the latter's chief source. The following pages will demonstrate where al-Āqḥiṣārī takes from the Damascene either verbatim or in paraphrase. The excerpts selected are polemical in nature. They are responses to a hypothetical opponent who claims that customary religious practices are good innovations by virtue of popular acceptance. Ibn Taymiyya, and al-Āqḥiṣārī by extension, rejects the idea that popular acceptance can be considered a benchmark for what is sound or rejected religious practice. In both cases, the discussion begins with the same two Prophetic traditions:

To proceed: Indeed the best of speech is the Book of God, the Exalted, and the best of guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad and the worst of affairs are its inventions: every invention is an innovation, and every innovation is misguidance.' This tradition, reported in the authenticated [*hadīths*] of the

[268] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā'*, pp. 270–271.

> *Maṣābīḥ,* was narrated by Jābir, God be pleased with him. In another tradition, narrated by ᶜIrbāḍ b. Sāriya, he, upon him be peace, said, 'Whoever amongst you lives after me shall see much discord; so you should cling to my way and the way of the Rightly-guided caliphs. Cling to it and hold on to it with your molars. Beware of matters invented, since every invention is an innovation, and every innovation is a misguidance.[269]

Both men are keen to see that the *ḥadīth* which appears to be prohibiting the invention of religious practices remains operative, and supercedes other traditions which appear to show the Prophet's Companions inaugurating religious practices prior to consulting him, and which have subsequently been used as proof by the pro-*bidᶜa* camp. The principal argument shared by both reformers, and which will be clear from the inter-textual comparison, is as follows: if there is any benefit in inaugurated religious practices, then their usefulness must be attested to by the Scripture or the Prophetic *Sunna.* If there exists a supporting proof from either of these sources, then the newly invented act already has a legal basis justifying it. In such a case, the Qur'an and the *Sunna* have already determined the validity of the act, so it is no longer a new invention.

Are we in a position to say something about the success of Ibn Taymiyya and his heirs in their campaign to extirpate "innovations" from the fabric of Islamic piety? Memon, for one, suggests that Ibn Taymiyya was a failure. Kātib Çelebi prophesied the same when he argued in his *Mīzān al-ḥaqq* that the militancy of Qāḍīzāde and his mob was always destined to fail. He went as far as to say: 'Once an innovation has taken root and become established in a community, it is the height of stupidity and ignorance to invoke the

[269] The excerpt is from al-Āqḥiṣārī's version, *Majlis XVIII*, f. 53r, but see it also in Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā',* p. 267.

principle of "enjoining right and forbidding evil" and to hope to constrain the people to abandon it.'[270] Indeed, if the yardstick for measuring their success is to be the extent to which "innovations" ceased being practiced, then they were perfect failures. However, Ibn Taymiyya and his heirs were unswerved by the high probability of their anti-*bid*^{c}*a* campaign failing. The purpose of exhorting people to refrain from inventing religion was driven by a firm belief in vanguardism, the kind that Sayyid Qutb many centuries later would revive. Ibn Taymiyya outlines his position thus:

> Let it not be asked what the benefit is in preventing what the Qur'an and *Sunna* have foretold are bound to occur. This is because they both also foretell that there will always be in this nation (*umma*) a group which clings tightly to the truth which God has sent His Prophet with, prayers and peace of God be upon him, up until the Last Hour. [This group] will never unite on misguidance. Thus when [one is involved] in preventing [these innovations, etc.] they are contributing to the growth, the support and the increase in faith of this victorious party. We ask God to make us from among them.[271]

Without doubt Ibn Taymiyya, Birgili, al-Āqḥiṣārī and Qāḍīzāde each considered themselves amongst that group which, irrespective of its size, and despite its opponents, continued to "enjoin the good and forbid the evil".

The arguments set out below are all of a conspicuously legal nature, probably aiming at jurists first and foremost. Ibn Taymiyya's *Iqtidā'* is facing left and al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Majālis* facing right. The Arabic text precedes the English translation.

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[270] Kātib Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth,* p. 89.

[271] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā',* p. 44.

إذ يقال له ما ثبت حسنه بالدلالة الشرعية الصحيحة فهو إما أن لا يكون بدعة فيبقى عموم العام في الحديثين على حاله أو يكون مخصوصاً من هذا العام والعام الذي خصّ منه البعض دليل فيما عدا المخصوص فمن ادّعى بثبوت حسن العبادة المحدثة وكونها مخصوصاً من هذا العام يحتاج إلى دليل يصلح أن يكون مخصّصاً لأنّ عادة أكثر البلاد وقول كثير من الزهّاد والعبّاد ليس ممّا يصلح أن يكون معارضاً لكلام الرسول عليه السلام وذلك الدّليل المخصوص هو الدّليل الشرعية من الكتاب والسنة والإجماع الذي هو مختصُ بأهل الاجتهاد وليس أهل الاجتهاد من الزهّاد والعبّاد فهو في حكم العوام لا يعتدّ بكلامه إلا أن يكون موافقاً للأصول والكتب المعتبرة

وأما المعارضات فالجواب عنها بأحد جوابين إما بأن يقال ما ثبت حسنه فليس من البدع فيبقى العموم محفوظا لا خصوص فيه وإما أن يقال ما ثبت حسنه فهو مخصوص من هذا العموم فيبقى العموم محفوظا لا خصوص فيه وإما أن يقال ما ثبت حسنه فهو مخصوص من العموم والعام المخصوص دليل فيما عدا صورة التخصيص فمن اعتقد أن بعض البدع مخصوص من هذا العموم احتاج إلى دليل يصلح للتخصيص وإلا كان ذلك العموم اللفظي المعنوى موجبا للنهي ثم المخصص هو الأدلة الشرعية من الكتاب والسنة والإجماع نصا واستنباطا وأما عادة بعض البلاد أو أكثرها وقول كثير من العلماء أو العباد أو أكثرهم ونحو ذلك فليس مما يصلح أن يكون معارضا لكلام الرسول صلى الله عليه وسلم حتى يعارض به ومن اعتقد أن أكثر هذه العادات المخالفة للسنن مجمع عليها بناء على أن الأمة أقرتها ولم تنكرها فهو مخطئ في هذا الاعتقاد فإنه لم يزل ولا يزال في كل وقت من ينهى عن عامة العادات المحدثة المخالفة للسنة

As for the contention, it can be countered by one of two replies: 1) Whatever is established as good cannot be an innovation, thereby leaving the general rule operative without admitting of an exception. 2) Whatever is established as good is an exception from the general rule, and so the generality remains preserved without allowing for exceptions. Or it may be said that whatever is established as good is an exceptional case of the general rule, and the general rule having been so characterised by an exceptional case is an indication for the rest of the cases other than the exceptional case. Whoever believes that some innovations are exceptional cases within the general rule must produce a proof justifying the exceptional treatment, otherwise the letter and spirit of the general principle must remain a proof for prohibition. The particularising agent (*mukhaṣṣiṣ*) must be a legal argument from the Book, the *Sunna* or Consensus which have the force of authority or are inferred as such. The local customs of one or most cities, so also the views of many scholars and the pious, albeit the majority of them cannot justifiably contradict the Prophet's utterance, prayers and peace of God be upon him. Whoever believes that most of these customs, though consensually viewed as contradicting the *Sunna,* derive their validity from the fact that the community has supported, rather than rejected, them is mistaken. There will always be in every time those who forbid novel customs which run counter to the spirit of the *Sunna.*	[To a contender] it can be argued that whatever is established as good on the basis of a sound legal indication is: 1) Not an innovation at all thereby preserving the generality of the general rule in the two *ḥadīths*. 2) An exceptional case (*makhṣūṣ*) in the general rule. A general rule which has in it some exceptional case is only an indication for those things which have not been excluded from it. If someone claims that the good of an innovated religious practice is established and that it is an exceptional case within the general rule, then he is required to furnish proof that can correctly be deemed a particularising agent (*mukhaṣṣiṣ*). The local customs of most cities, and the sayings of most ascetics (*zāhid*) and worshippers (*ᶜābid*), cannot be correctly considered to validate the contravention of the speech of the Messenger, upon him be peace. The particularizing agent (*dalīl mukhaṣṣiṣ*) should be a legal one from the Book, the *Sunna* or the consensus of the qualified jurists (*ahl al-ijtihād*). Any ascetic or worshipper who is not from among the qualified jurists is of the status of the laity—one whose views are not considered valid unless they are in conformity with the principles [of religion] and the authentic books.

وهذه قاعدة قد دلت عليها السنة والإجماع مع ما في كتاب الله من الدلالة عليها أيضا قال تعالى أم لهم شركاء شرعوا لهم من الدين مالم يأذن به الله فمن ندب إلى شيء يتقرب به إلى الله أو أوجبه بقوله أو فعله من غير أن يشرعه الله فقد شرع من الدين مالم يأذن به الله ومن اتبعه في ذلك فقد اتخذه شريكا لله	وهذه قاعدة دلّت عليها السنّة والإجماع مع أن فيٍ كتاب الله تعالى ما يدلّ عليها أيضاً وهو أنه تعالى قال أم لهم شركاء شرعوا لهم من الدّينٍ ما لم يأذن به الله فمن أحدث شيئاً يتقرب إلى الله تعالى من قول أو فعل من غير أن يشرعه الله تعالى فقد شرع من الدّين ما لم يأذن به الله تعالى فٍمن تبعه فقد اتخذه شريكاً ومعبوداً
This rule is indicated by the *Sunna* and the consensus (*ijmā*[c]) as well as what indications exist concerning it in the Book of God. God says, "What! Have they partners, who have legislated for them some religion without the permission of God?" So whoever invents a thing in order to gain closeness to God or makes it a requirement by his speech or action, when God Himself has not legislated for it, then he has indeed legislated a thing in religion which God has given no permission for. Furthermore, whoever follows him has taken him as a partner and a deity.	This rule is indicated by the *Sunna* and the consensus (*ijmā*[c]) as well as what indications exist concerning it in the Book of God. God says, "What! Have they partners, who have legislated for them some religion without the permission of God?" So whoever invents a thing in order to gain closeness to God, whether it be a statement or action, when God Himself has not legislated for it, then he has indeed legislated a thing in religion which God has given no permission for. Furthermore, whoever follows him has taken him as a partner and a deity.

قال سبحانه اتخذوا أحبارهم ورهبانهم أربابا من دون الله والمسيح بن مريم وما أمروا إلا ليعبدوا إلها واحدا لا إله إلا هو سبحانه عما يشركون قال عدي بن حاتم للنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم يا رسول الله ما عبدوهم قال ما عبدوهم ولكن أحلوا لهم الحرام فأطاعوهم وحرموا عليهم الحلال فأطاعوهم فمن أطاع أحدا في دين لم يأذن به الله من تحليل أو تحريم أو استحباب أو إيجاب فقد لحقه من هذا الذم نصيب كما يلحق الآمر الناهي أيضا نصيب	كما قال الله تعالى في حق أهل الكتاب قد اتخذوا أحبارهم ورهبانهم أرباباً من دون الله فقال عديّ بن حاتم للنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ما عبدوهم فقال النبي عليه السلام أطاعوهم فمن أطاع أحداً في دينٍ لم يأذنٍ به الله تعالى فقد عبده واتخذه رباً
God, the Exalted, says, ‘They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords below God, and (they take as their Lord) Christ the son of Mary; yet they were commanded to worship but One God, there is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him: (Far is He) from having the partners they associate (with Him).’ ᶜAdī b. Ḥātim said to the Prophet: ‘They do not worship them!’ to which the Prophet replied, ‘They do not, but they do make for them lawful that which is unlawful and these, they obey them, and they make for them unlawful that which is lawful and these, they obey them.’ Anyone who obeys someone concerning a religious matter God has not prescribed as lawful, unlawful, commendable or obligatory will be thereby considered reproachable, which is also true of him who commands this man to do or not to do something.	This is what God, the Exalted, says about the People of the Book: ‘They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of God’. ᶜAdī b. Ḥātim said to the Prophet, upon him be peace, ‘They do not worship them.’ [In explanation], the Prophet said, ‘They obeyed them; whoever obeys someone in some religion for which there is no permission from God, the Exalted, has worshipped him and taken him as a lord’.

والضابط في هذا أن يقال الناس لا يحدثون شيئاً إلاّ أنّهم يرونه مصلحةً إذ لو اعتقدوا فيه مفسدة لم يحدثوه فما رآه الناس مصلحةً ينظر فيه السبب فإن كان السبب أمراً قد حدث بعد النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فإنه يجوز إحداث ما تدعو الحاجة إليه كنظم الدلائل فإن السبب الداعي إليه ظهور الفرق الضالّة فإنّهم لمّا لم يظهر في عهده عليه السلام لم يحتج إليه وإن كان المقتضى لفعله موجوداً في عصره عليه السلام لكن ترك العارض زال بموته عليه السلام فكذلك يجوز إحداثه كجمع القرآن فإنّ المانع منه في حياته عليه السلام كون الوحي لا يزال ينزل فيغيّر الله ما شاء فزال ذلك المانع بموته عليه السلام وأمّا ما كان المقتضى لفعله في عهده عليه السلام موجوداً من غير وجود المانع منه ومع ذلك لم يفعله عليه السلام فإحداثه تغيير لدين الله تعالى إذ لو كان فيه مصلحة لفعله عليه السلام أو حث عليه ولما لم يفعله عليه السلام ولم يحث عليه علم أنّه ليس فيه مصلحة بل هو بدعة قبيحة سيئة مثاله الأذان في العيدين فإنه لما أحدثه بعض السلاطين أنكر العلماء وحكموا بكراهيته فلو لم يكن كونه بدعة دليلاً على الكراهة لقيل هذا ذكر الله

والضابط في هذا والله أعلم أن يقال إن الناس لا يحدثون شيئا إلا لأنهم يرونه مصلحة إذ لو اعتقدوه مفسدة لم يحدثوه فإنه لا يدعو إليه عقل ولا دين فما رآه المسلمون مصلحة نظر في السبب المحوج إليه فإن كان السبب المحجوج إليه أمرا حدث بعد النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم لكن تركه النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم من غير تفريط منا فهنا قد يجوز إحداث ما تدعو الحاجة إليه وكذلك إن

كان المقتضي لفعله قائما على عهد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لكن تركه النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم لمعارض قد زال بموته # وإما مالم يحدث سبب يحوج إليه أو كان السبب المحوج إليه بعض ذنوب العباد فهنا لا يجوز الإحداث فكل أمر يكون المقتضي لفعله على عهد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم موجودا لو كان مصلحة ولم يفعل يعلم أنه لبس بمصلحة وأما ما حدث المقتضى له بعد موته من غير معصية الخالق فقد يكون مصلحة

<table>
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<td>The rule in this respect may be formulated as follows: People do not originate a thing unless they consider it beneficial. If they believe it harmful they would not originate it, because neither reason nor faith call upon to do so. Whatever appears to Muslims as positive must be investigated as to the need that necessitates it.
If the need warranting it arose after the Prophet's death but was left by him without any negligence on his part, then it is permissible to originate what the need warrants. The same applies also if the need for originating it was present during the Prophet's lifetime but which he abandoned in view of an impediment which now, after his death, has been lifted.
As for what is originated without, however, a need warranting it, or what does warrant it are human transgressions, then, the innovation is not permissible. Any matter which may have been necessary in the Prophet's lifetime but which was not acted upon by him is simply not a positive need.</td>
<td>The rule in this respect may be formulated as follows: People do not originate a thing unless they see in it a benefit; if they thought it was harmful, they would not have originated it. So, whatever the people deem of benefit should be judged according to the cause it serves:

1) If the cause relates to a matter occurring after the Prophet, upon him be peace, then [know] that it is permissible to originate whatever there is a need for, such as the composing of polemical arguments. This is necessitated by the need to expose misguided groups. There was no need for [polemical arguments] during his time, upon him be peace, since such groups had yet to appear.
2) If the need to originate it was present during his time, upon him be peace, but was abandoned due to an impediment, which now, after his death, was lifted, then here also it is permissible to originate it, such as the compilation of the Qur'an. What prevented it being done in his life, upon him be peace, was the fact that revelation (*waḥy*) was still being received, and [with it the possibility] that God changes whatever He wills. This preventative disappeared with his death, upon him be peace.
As for a requirement to originate [an innovation] being present during his life, upon him be peace, without the existence of an impediment, yet he, upon him be peace, still did not enact it, then to originate it is to alter the religion of God, the Exalted. This is because if there was [truly] any benefit in it, he would have enacted it, upon him be peace, or at least encouraged it […] Examples of it are the call to the two Eid prayers. Following its institutionalisation by certain Sultans, the Scholars rebuked it judging it to be hated (*makrūh*). If it were not for its innovativeness being the evidence for its hatred, it would have been said that is [an act of]</td>
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</table>

وهكذا جمع القرآن فإن المانع من جمعه على عهد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم كان أن الوحي كان لا يزال ينزل فيغير الله ما يشاء ويحكم ما يريد فلو جمع في مصحف واحد لتعسر أو تعذر تغييره كل وقت فلما استقر القرآن بموته صلى الله عليه وسلم واستقرت الشريعة بموته صلى الله عليه وسلم أمن الناس من زيادة القرآن ونقصه وأمنوا من زيادة الايجاب والتحريم والمقتضي للعمل قائم بسنته صلى الله عليه وسلم فعمل المسلمون بمقتضى سنته وذلك العمل من سنته وإن كان يسمى هذا في اللغة بدعة	
The same is true also for the manner in which the Qur'an was put together. What prevented its compilation during the Prophet's lifetime was the fact that it was still being revealed to him and God would alter or retain whatever parts thereof He wished. Had it been put together in a single volume, it would have been difficult or impossible to register an alteration every time it was introduced. But once the Qur'an and the *Sharīᶜa* had been permanently fixed, with the death of the Prophet, the Muslims were spared further alteration by increase or decrease in the number of Qur'anic verses, as they were also a further increase in both positive and negative obligations. The provision for it was already there in the *Sunna* and the Muslims acted likewise. Though an innovation in the language, the act is nevertheless a *Sunna* of the Prophet.	

The correlation between the two texts on the basis of the comparative study above is striking, but it would be premature to conclude that al-Āqḥiṣārī's source is Ibn Taymiyya before first eliminating Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya as a possible source. This is since the theology and ethics of Ibn Taymiyya are 'expressed once again and elaborated, often with a new refinement, in the work of Ibn al-Qayyim'.[272] Describing Ibn al-Qayyim's broader intellectual outlook, Bell says, 'Throughout the evolution of [Ibn al-Qayyim's] thought the fundamental theological positions remain the same, faithfully reflecting the doctrine of his teacher. It is, for the most, only the style and the scope of his writings which set them apart from the compositions of Ibn Taymiyya.'[273] Furthermore, we know that al-Āqḥiṣārī draws heavily from Ibn al-Qayyim elsewhere in the *Majālis*, particularly in the early sections relating to Sufism. Following an index and database search, however, it is clear that none of the passages cited above are to be found in any of the twenty-four major works of Ibn al-Qayyim.[274]

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[272] J. Bell, *Love Theory in Later Ḥanbalite Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), p. 103.

[273] J. Bell, *Love Theory,* p. 103.

[274] The database search using a resource available at <www.islamport.com/isp_eBooks/qym/> [last accessed 04/09/2013], included the following texts: *Aḥkām ahl al-dhimma,* 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1997); *Iᶜlām al-muwaqqiᶜīn ᶜan rabb al-ᶜālamīn,* 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1973); *Ighāthat al-lahafān min maṣā'id al-shayṭān,* 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Maᶜrifa, 1975); *Ijtimāᶜ al-juyūsh al-islāmiyya,* 1 vol. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob Al-ilmiyyah, 1984); *al-Amthāl fī l-Qur'ān al-karīm,* 1 vol. (Tanta: Maktabat al-Ṣaḥāba, 1986); *al-Tibyān fī aqsām al-Qur'ān,* 1 vol. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr); *al-Jawāb al-kāfī,* 1 vol. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyyah); *al-Rūḥ fī l-kalām ᶜalā arwāḥ al-amwāt wa l-aḥyā' bi-l-dalā'il mina l-Kitāb wa l-Sunna,* 1 vol. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyyah, 1975); *al-Ṣalāt wa ḥukm tārikihā,* 1 vol. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1996); *al-Ṣawāᶜiq al-mursala ᶜalā l-Jahmiyya wa l-Muᶜaṭṭila,* 4 vols. (Riyad: Dār al-ᶜĀṣima, 1998); *al-Ṭuruq al-ḥukmiyya fī l-siyāsat al-sharᶜiyya,* 1 vol. (Cairo: Maṭbaᶜat al-Madanī); *al-Furūsiyya* (Hā'il: Dār al-Andalus, 1993); *al-Fawā'id,* 1 vol. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyya, 1973); *al-Manār al-munīf,* 1 vol. (Aleppo: Maṭbaᶜat al-Maktūbāt al-Islāmiyya, 1983); *al-Wābil al-ṣayyib mina l-kalim al-ṭayyib,* 1 vol. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ᶜArabī, 1985); *Badā'iᶜ al-fawā'id,* 4 vols. (Mecca: Maktaba Nizār Muṣtafā al-Bāz, 1996); *Tuḥfat l-mawdūd bi-aḥkām al-mawlūd,* 1 vol. (Damascus: Maktaba Dār al-Bayān, 1971); *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn wa nuzhat al-mushtāqīn* (Dar al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyya, 1992); *Zād al-maᶜād,* 5 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assat al-Risāla, 1986); *Shifā' al-ᶜalīl fī masā'il al-qaḍā' wa l-qadar wa l-ḥikma wa l-taᶜṭī,* 1 vol. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1978); *Ighāthat al-lahafān fī ḥukm ṭalāq al-ghaḍbān* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1986); *ᶜUddat al-ṣābirīn wa dhakhīrat al-shākirīn,* 1 vol. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah); *Madārij al-sālikīn bayna manāzil iyyāka naᶜbudu wa ᶜiyyāka nastaᶜīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ᶜArabī, 1973); *Miftāḥ dār al-saᶜāda wa manshūr wilāyat al-ᶜilm wa l-idāra,* 2 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah); *Hidāyat al-hayārā fī ajwibat al-yahūd wa l-naṣārā* (Medina: Islamic University).

It is noticeable above that, for the most part, al-Āqḥiṣārī's treatment is aligned with Ibn Taymiyya's approach. Al-Āqḥiṣārī, however, rarely quotes verbatim from the *Iqtidā'.* His is mostly a rehashing of his source text*,* something he is likely to have preferred because of Ibn Taymiyya's treatment being rather prolix and at times abstruse. Al-Āqḥiṣārī demonstrates that he has grasped fully the survey of the *Iqtidā'*: he is not merely regurgitating material. He does rely heavily on his source text, but manipulates his extractions expertly, adding and subtracting at will, altering the architecture and arrangement of points. Indeed, it was by no means a straightforward task to extract from *Majlis XVIII* the places where al-Āqḥiṣārī had referred to the *Iqtidā'* because of the rearrangement of the source material. Certainly al-Āqḥiṣārī's skill as a writer are brought out from his ability to refashion the relevant parts of the *Iqtidā'* for his own purposes and audience. This would have been particularly important for a work like the *Majālis,* since it was, among other things, intended as a manual for sermonists.

Birgili Meḥmet Efendi is the man most likely to have introduced the Taymiyyan School to Ottoman Turkey. Until this time, it would have been difficult to find Ottoman ᶜulamā' who were not associated with the Fakhr al-Rāzī school.[275] Birgili, however, shared many of the views of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim and, like them, was of the view that extra-scriptural religious practices which were commonplace among certain Sufis especially, denigrated the religion and led Muslims away from the *Sunna*. Though the focus of his most stinging attacks was on such Sufis, Birgili did not hold back from attacking the ᶜulamā' for their corruption. He disseminated his views mainly through the written word, never passing an opportunity to admonish and advise his, even when writing texts completely disconnected from theology, law or ethics.[276] One of his best known Arabic works, for which there are no less than two hundred extant hand-written manuscripts in the Süleymaniye Library, is *al-Ṭarīqat al-Muḥammadiyya* (hereafter *Ṭarīqa*)—*The Muḥammadan Way,* now a widely relied upon reference for Sufi disciples. Ocak, repeating a widely held opinion, suggests that this book initiated the first Qāḍīzādeli murmurings that swiftly evolved to become a major threat to the existing religious order in the Ottoman lands during the seventeenth century.[277]

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[275] A. Ocak, 'Religious Sciences and the Ulema' in *Ottoman Civilization,* edited by H. Inalcik and G. Render (Ankara: Ministry of Culture, 2003), p. 263.

[276] Birgili's *al-ᶜAwāmil,* one of the most widely taught grammar texts in Turkey right up to today, which evolved out of Jurjānī's *Miat ᶜāmil*, is a prime example of this. Every sentence is formulated in order to demonstrate a grammatical rule as well as a point of admonition or spiritual guidance. One can be forgiven for thinking that the primary objective behind this work was to steer the reader spiritually rather than through the complexities of Arabic grammar.

[277] A. Ocak, 'Religious Sciences and the Ulema', p. 263.

Birgili's conceptualisation of *bid^{c}a* is also demonstrably influenced by Ibn Taymiyya. Though his treatment of the subject is markedly more concise than that of the *Majālis,* there are still clearly discernible influences of the *Iqtidā'*. It is clear from the survey of Ibn Taymiyya's position on *bid^{c}a* that he is not willing to accept that innovations in ritual practice are acceptable, and he is categorical in his opposition to those people who cite the statement of ^{c}Umar, '*ni^{c}mat bid^{c}a hiya*' as a justification and qualification (*takhṣīṣ*) of the *ḥadīth*s opposing *bid^{c}a*. Ibn Taymiyya's argument—that ^{c}Umar was using the word *bid^{c}a* in its lexical sense, is found in Birgili in the following passage:

> One might ask, How can you reconcile the words of the Prophet when he said, 'All innovations are perversities, a straying away from the right path,' with the words of the experts in canonical law, who say that innovations are sometimes permissible in harmless everyday occurrences – for instance, the use of a sifter, or eating wheat cleansed of its bran? […] Our answer would refer to the literal meaning of the word *bid'a,* which means simply something that appears afterwards, whether it be a custom that appears after another custom or a fashion of worship that appears after another way of worship. The word *bid'a*—innovation—is derived from *ibtidā^{c}*—the origin, the first appearance of a thing, and simply means that which comes after the original.[278]

Radtke is of the view that there is nothing to indicate a linkage between Birgili and Ibn Taymiyya, and thus reaches the conclusion that there cannot be asserted any Taymiyyan influence on the *Ṭarīqa* at all: 'In der Gegnerschaft gegen diese Tendenzen der, wie er meint, zeitgenösschen Sufik greift er nun nicht auf Ġazālī und *auch nicht auf Ibn Taymiyya* zurück,

[278] Birgili, *The Path of Muhammad,* p. 71.

sondern auf die *Ḥanafitische Rechtstradition*.[279] His assumption is difficult to accept since the basis for it is his observation that neither Ibn Taymiyya's name nor a single authorship of his is explicitly cited in the *Ṭarīqa*. The work done in this study, linking al-Āqḥiṣārī to Ibn Taymiyya has shown that there are more ways than one to show linkages between texts. There is a further question, namely whether there are any places where the marks of the *Ṭarīqa* can be shown within the *Majālis*? Here we can cite the following, in which the very same examples of newly invented utensils appear, in the same order, in both works. The *Tarīqa* is left-facing and the *Majālis* right-facing:

[279] Bernd Radtke, 'Birgiwîs *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya*. Einige Bemerkungen und Überlegungen', *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 26 (2002) 159-174 (p. 172).

فإن قيل كيف التطبيق بين قوله عليه السلام كل بدعة ضلالة وبين قول الفقهاء أن البدعة قد تكون مباحاً كاستعمال المنخل والمواظبة على أكل لب الحنطة والشبع منه وقد تكون مستحباً كبناء المنارة والمدارس وتصنيف الكتب بل قد تكون واجباً كنظم الدلائل لرد شبه الملاحدة ونحوهم قلنا للبدعة معنىً لغوي عام هو المحدث مطلقاً عادةً أو عبادةً لأنها اسم من الابتداء بمعنى الإحداث وهذه هي المقصد في عبارة الفقهاء يعنون بها ما أحدث بعد الصدر الأول مطلقاً ومعنىً شرعي خاص وهو زيادة في الدين أو النقصان منه الحادثان بعد الصحابة بغير إذن من الشارع لا قولاً ولا فعلاً	والمراد بالبدعة المذكورة في هذين الحديثين البدعة السيئة التي ليس لها من الكتاب والسنة أصل وسند ظاهر أو خفي ملفوظ أو مستنبط لا البدعة الغير السيئة التي يكون على أصل وسند ظاهر أو خفي فإنها لا تكون ضلالة بل هي قد تكون مباحة كاستعمال المنخل والمواظبة على أكل لب الحنطة والشبع منه وقد تكون مستحبة كبناء المنارة وتصنيف الكتب وقد تكون واجباً كنظم الدلائل لرد شبه الملاحدة والفرق الضالة لأن البدعة لها معنيان أحدهما لغوي عامّ وهو المحدث مطلقاً سواء كان من العادات أو من العبادات والثاني شرعي خاصّ وهو زيادة في الدين أو النقصان منه بعد الصحابة بغير إذن من الشارع لا قولاً ولا فعلاً ولا صريحاً ولا إشارةً فإنّها في الحديثين وإن كانت عامة تشتمل جميع المحدثات لكن عمومها ليس بحسب معناها اللغوي العام بل عمومها بحسب معناها الشرعي الخاص فلا تتناول العادات أصلاً بل تقتصر على بعض الاعتقادات أو بعض صور العبادات

One might ask, How can you reconcile the words of the Prophet when he said, ‘All innovations are perversities, a straying away from the right path,’ with the words of the experts in canonical law, who say that innovations are sometimes permissible in harmless everyday occurrences—for instance, the use of a sifter, or eating wheat cleansed of its bran? Further, sometimes innovations are considered desirable—for instance, the building of minarets for mosques, or the building of schools for the teaching of theology and sciences, or the production of books, etc. Sometimes such an innovation becomes an obligation—for instance, the gathering of worldly proofs to refute the views of heretics. Strictly speaking, the religious meaning of innovation is the addition to, or subtraction from, the religion as it was at the time of the Prophet and his Companions, especially when these changes cannot be substantiated by anything said or done by the originator of the religion. The concept of innovation within its strictly religious context can only apply to forms of worship, but not to everyday life and customs.	Intended (Murād) by the word ‘innovation’ in these two traditions is the pernicious (*sayyi’a*) variety [...] Unintended is the innovation which is non-pernicious, that which has a basis and a clear or subtle support; this sort is not an error, in fact it may be permissible (*mubāḥ*), such as using the sifter or regularly eating wheat cleansed of its bran and satiating oneself with it; it may be recommended (*mustaḥabb*), such as the construction of minarets and the authoring of books; it may be obligatory (*wājib*), such as composing evidences to refute the uncertainties of the heretics and the misguided sects. “Innovation” (*bid^{c}a*) has two meanings: one is general and linguistic, referring to ‘invention’ in the absolute sense, whether it is [the invention of] customary practice or religious practice. The second is specifically legal, namely a commission or an omission in regards to the religion, after [the era of] the Companions, without authorisation from the Lawgiver, whether in word or deed, explicit or implicit. [The term ‘innovation’] in the two traditions, though general, incorporates all forms of originating. However, its generality is not according to its wider linguistic implication, but rather its specific legal implication. Hence it does not include customs in the first instance, but instead is restricted to certain creedal issues and forms of worship.

It is clear from the textual comparison above that there is a link between Birgili’s *Ṭarīqa* and the *Majālis* on the concept of *bid^{c}a.* And though the possibility exists that both are taking from a third, common source, it is highly improbable since the views expressed regarding the range of innovations, among them eating utensils and the ‘eating of wheat cleansed of its bran’, are not to be found in any other works listed in the anti-*bid^{c}a* literature.

Al-Āqḥiṣārī's ommission of Ibn Taymiyya's name from the *Majālis* is interesting and might even be seen as deceitful given the extent to which he draws from the latters *Iqtidā'.* Yet there are several possibilities as to why such an ommission may be justified: the first is the position of Ibn Taymiyya on the visitation of graves for the purpose of intercession, a view that was rejected by many Ottoman ᶜulamā'. Kātib Çelebi in his discussion on shrines in *Mīzān al-ḥaqq* tells us that Ibn Taymiyya's view on the subject was that it should be forbidden to visit them, including the tomb of the noblest Prophet himself. He recounts that Ibn Taymiyya furnished as proof in support of the view that the deceased are unable to intervene in this world a tradition in which ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb sought the mediation of 'Abbas, uncle of the Prophet, during a period of drought. The point was that he might have visited the tomb of the Prophet to seek his mediation but did not because he did not believe even the Prophet could be of use after departing the world. We are told that Ibn Taymiyya's position was extreme and caused him to fall foul of the ulama in Egypt and Syria, who eventually brought him to trial before the Sultan of Egypt. As a result, his opponents declared Ibn Taymiyya an infidel and eventually imprisoned him.[280]

It was also circulating in Ottoman Turkey well in advance of al-Āqḥiṣārī's time that Ibn Taymiyya faced unyielding opposition for his harsh views on this issue, and on the question of intercession (*tawassul*). Siwāsī for one, in his *Durar al-ᶜaqā'id,* seems to exploit this fact in his own defence of intercession and the visitation of graves for the purpose of deriving benefit from

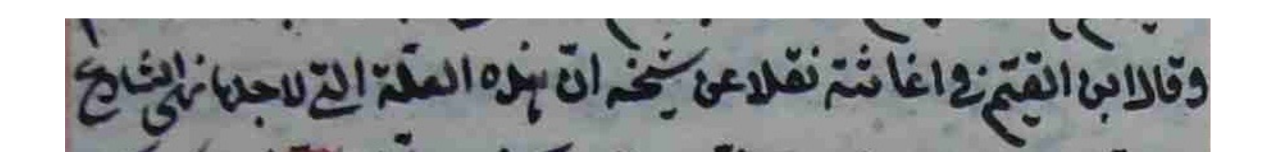
[280] Kātib Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth,* p. 93.

the deceased. He mentions Ibn Taymiyya’s position on visiting graves for intercession and the fact that he was subsequently excommunicated by the scholars of Egypt for it. Siwāsī is unambiguous about his feelings towards Ibn Taymiyya: by denouncing the practice as un-Islamic, Ibn Taymiyya had gone astray and therefore deserved the criticism of his peers. It was only after “careful investigation” that the ᶜulamā’ of his time reached the conclusion that Ibn Taymiyya must be killed; and it was only because Ibn Taymiyya had sought pardon from his peers, and repented to God, that he managed to escape execution.[281] Despite the problems relating to the historical value of Siwāsī’s narrative—Ibn Taymiyya was not threatened with death, and neither do we have any record of him recanting his views—Siwāsī probably relayed a version that had currency at the time among members of the ᶜIlmiyye and Sufi orders who were in support of intercession at shrines. Despite the inaccuracies of this account, there was probably here sufficient reason for al-Āqḥiṣārī to steer clear of mentioning the shaykh al-Islam.

Other possibilities exist, of course. A scholar invoking Ibn Taymiyya’s name might have been regarded as expressing political dissent. Ibn Taymiyya preached a theology of liberation which sought to “free man from the worship of slaves and return him to the worship of the Creator of slaves’ (*min ᶜibādat al-ᶜibād ilā ᶜibādat rabb al-ᶜibād*)”. This landed him in trouble with the authorities time and again. M. Umar Memon says: ‘[The authorities] could not put up with Ibn Taimiya’s polemical zeal and having realised that [his] dream of recasting Muslim society in the image of its *Salaf*—a dream which was perfectly embodied and chalked out to the last minute details in his *Kitāb as-siyāsa ash-shar‘īya fī iṣlāḥ ar-rā‘ī wa ’r-ra‘īya*—was out of keeping with

[281] Siwāsī, *Durar al-ᶜaqā’id,* f. 59r, cited in Öztürk, ‘Islamic Orthodoxy’, p. 233.

the historical evolution and reality of Islam's political life, brought him to his last trial in which the privilege of giving fatwas was withdrawn from him and he was imprisoned in the Citadel at Damascus where 26 months later he died.'[282] Therefore, any author ostensibly seeking to revive the Ibn Taymiyya's way could be suspected of stirring up anti-establishment sentiments, of propagating a revivalist doctrine in order to directly challenge the position of the Sultan and his ᶜulamā'. Yet another reason may lie in Ibn Taymiyya's style of writing. In his legal and theological writings, he frequently offended the proclivities of other Muslims. In fact, some of his theological views which resulted in his imprisonment are not even easily reconciled with the theological beliefs of Birgili and al-Āqhiṣārī, both of whom, as faithful Māturīdīs, would have struggle to accept Ibn Taymiyya's condemnation of their brethren in doctrine. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya is, on the other hand, mentioned explicitly by al-Āqḥiṣārī, as is his work the *Ighātha*. The following text shows this, the translation of which is: 'Ibn Qayyim says in his *Ighātha,* quoting his shaykh...' (*qāla Ibn al-Qayyim fī Ighāthatihi naqlan ᶜan shaykhihi*):

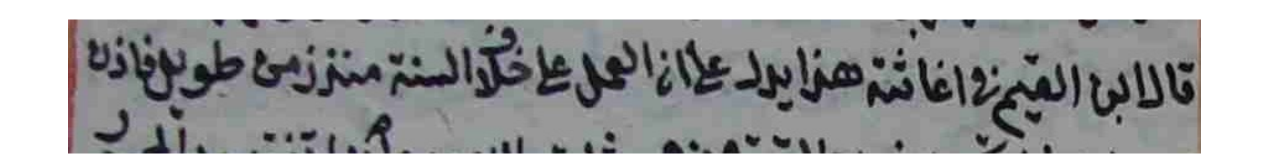

وقال ابن القيم في اغاثته نقلا عن شيخه ان هذه

The second example shows al-Āqḥiṣārī referring to Ibn al-Qayyim alone:[283]

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282 Memon, *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle,* p. 47.

283 The first line is found in *Majlis XVII*, f. 50r, and the second in *Majlis LVII*, f. 158r. The images are from the original *Michot 0402* manuscript.


قال ابن القيم في اغاثة هذا يدل على ان العمل على خلاف السنة من زمن طويل فاذا

It is impossible to say anything final about why al-Āqḥiṣārī thought it unacceptable to mention Ibn Taymiyya when, at the same time, he had no qualms about citing Ibn al-Qayyim. Presumably, the name of the student did not carry the same political baggage that the name of the teacher did. Perhaps also the approach taken by Ibn al-Qayyim when writing on Sufism, which by his own admission borrowed the nomenclature of traditional Sufism, might have made his writing more acceptable to the delicate Ottoman palate, which already had a proclivity for the spiritual systems developed by Ibn ^{c}Arabī and the other Rūmī, Jalāl al-Dīn.[284]

Pernicious Innovations

To complete the reconstruction of Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī as a scholar justifiably located within the Ottoman revivalist milieu of the 16^{th}/17^{th} century, some of his views on aspects of Ottoman Islam which he deemed as unacceptable because of their contravening the Sharī^{c}a would be useful. The matters of dispute engaging Qāḍīzādeli revivalists and their opponents are presented by Kātib Çelebi in his *Mīzān al-ḥaqq.* Disputes over a host of religious practices and social customs in terms of whether they were acceptable in the sight of the Law were

[284] Even some of the titles of Ibn a-Qayyim's spiritual works were based on the titles of well-known Sufī manuals, such as his *Madārij al-sālikīn,* the commentary on the *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* of al-Anṣārī, and the *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn.* For more on the differences in approach of Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Taymiyya in their spiritual writings, see J. Bell's chapter 'Love in the Works of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya', *Love Theory in Later Ḥanbalite Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979).

commonplace. Among these were singing and dancing, congregating for supererogatory prayers, the performance of *dhikr* out aloud, the use of coffee and tobacco, shaking hands after prayer, invoking blessings on the Prophet and his Companions, reciting the Qur'an melodically and the visitation of tombs. Some of these have already received attention in earlier chapters. Al-Āqḥiṣārī not only contributes his own views on each of these issues, he also adopts similar stances to Birgili, and his contemporary Meḥmet Qāḍīzāde. Yet for all the convergences, there is a distinct style of writing which marks al-Āqḥiṣārī apart from his fellow revivalists. His methodical and analytical approach to tackling the issues is more sophisticated, as will become clear in the following pages.

Al-Āqḥiṣārī's views are mostly found in *Majālis al-abrār,* though it is true that the issues are also engaged in his shorter epistles. This is not the place to undertake a comprehensive survey of al-Āqḥiṣārī's thought, or survey the dimensions that are addressed to the depth they probably deserve. Here only the issue of supererogatory prayers and handshaking are investigated. Nevertheless, they provide clear insights into the way in which al-Āqḥiṣārī thought through legal problems, and they also demonstrate the inner workings of his polemical method. Above all, they further support the thesis that al-Āqḥiṣārī was at once a member of the ᶜIlmiyye and a man actively involved in the Qāḍīzādeli struggle.

On supererogatory prayers in congregation

Kātib Çelebi provides some historical background to this debate which raged between the Qāḍīzādelis and their opponents during the 16th and 17th centuries. He tells us that the jurists in early Islam were opposed to the performance of supererogatory prayers in congregation deeming it an abomination, however, by the end of the third Islamic century, Raghā'ib[285] prayers had arisen in Jerusalem and swiftly became a dear prayer in the hearts of the masses. As a result it became customary to perform it together with the prayers of Berāt and the Night of Power in congregation. He continues that despite the opposition of some Ulema, who argued these congregational prayers were innovations and the performance of them abominated, the people would never abandom them. Custom was thus on the side of their performance—and since it had a place as a source of law—it was eventually agreed by jurists that there would be greater harm in trying to prevent such practices.[286]

However, the debate over prayers in congregation on the nights of Raghā'ib, Barāt and the Night of Power was to be reignited in the seventeenth century, and although Kātib Çelebi would have us believe that it was only ignorant fools that took the extreme view of prohibition, the truth was that many prominent jurists were also on the side of prohibition. Qāḍīzāde confirms this in his *Risaleh*: '[The innovators] have introduced prayers like that of Raghā'ib, Barāt and al-Qadr. The ᶜulamā', however, reject these prayers and have [as a group] raised objections in all parts of the

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[285] The prayer of Raghā'ib is performed on the eve of the first Friday of Rajab. Considered "The night of the prayer for extensive and desirable gifts"; the prayers and supplications contain hundreds of invocations, prostrations and recitations from the Qur'an. See M.J. Kister, 'Radjab', *EI*[2]. Maribel Fierro, in her survey of the treatises on *bidᶜa,* shows that the prayer was recorded by many of the contributors to the *bidᶜa* literature amongst the popular innovations. Al-Turṭūshī mentions it in his *Kitāb al-ḥawādith wa l-bidaᶜ,* and is, in turn, quoted by Abū Shāma and al-Suyūṭī; Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Ḥājj, al-Turkmānī and Ibn Fūdī also included the prayer among the innovations. See Fierro, 'The treatises against innovations', p. 226.

[286] Kātib, Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth,* p. 97.

Muslim world.'[287] Qāḍīzāde was correct to assert that he was not alone in holding this view; other ᶜulamā' locked in this debate included Üṣṭüwānī, al-Āqḥiṣārī and many others besides. It is to al-Āqḥiṣārī's views on this issue that we now turn.

Firstly, al-Āqḥiṣārī is opposed to the sanctification of any period of time or geographical place which has not been sanctified by the Sharīᶜa. In his view, to do so would be tantamount to reviving the ancient customs of the pagan Arabs, which had already been substituted by the two Eids (and additionally the days of *tashrīq* that follow both days of celebration). The only geographical places that Islam has sanctified, according to al-Āqḥiṣārī, are the Kaᶜba at Mecca, ᶜArafāt, Minā and Muzdalifa. Al-Āqḥiṣārī insists that each of these time periods and places have particular acts of piety associated with them which are directed by and to God. It thus cannot be correct to add any more to these for this is the very meaning of inventing new forms of religion.[288]

On the Raghāʾib prayer, al-Āqḥiṣārī begins the twenty-fourth *Majlis* with the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, 'God descends to the lower heaven on the middle night of Shaᶜbān to forgive a greater number than the hairs on the sheep of [the tribe of] Kalb'. The narration is of ᶜĀ'isha and is counted among the good (*ḥasan*) traditions collected in the *Maṣābīh al-sunna.* A lengthy survey follows the *ḥadīth,* in typical Āqḥiṣārian style. This particular *ḥadīth* presents the theological problem of anthropomorphism since God is described as descending from Heaven. For this

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[287] Qādīzāde, *Risāleh,* f. 91r.

[288] *Majlis XIX*, f. 59r.

reason al-Āqḥiṣārī preambles the discussion with a brief but interesting rhetorical discussion. We are made aware once more as to why it is patently wrong to consider al-Āqḥiṣārī, and indeed his Qāḍīzādeli comrades, as "Salafīs". Adhering to central hermeneutical principles of the Māturīdī and Āsh^{c}arī theological traditions, al-Āqḥiṣārī is keen to avoid any construction of God as a "moving" (*mutaḥarrik*) essence on the basis of this *ḥadīth*. According to Ash^{c}arī theology, movement (*intiqāl*) necessitates change (*taghayyur*) and is thus impossible for God. For al-Āqḥiṣārī it is impermissible to read the *ḥadīth* literally:

> The meaning of [this *ḥadīth*] is that God transitions on that night from the attribute of Sublimity (*jalāl)*—which necessitates the subjugation of enemies and taking revenge from sinners—to the attribute of Beauty—which necessitates mercy and forgiveness. The *ḥadīth* must be understood in this way because descent (*nuzūl*), ascent (*ṣu^{c}ūd*), movement (*intiqāl*) and rest (*sukūn*) are all attributes of finite bodies (*ajsām mutaḥayyiza*); contrastingly it is known by incontrovertible rational and transmitted proofs that God is far removed from being a body or finite [...] Thus the meaning of this is as the *Ahl al-ḥaqq* state—that His *mercy* descends and He increases in grace and forgiveness for his worshippers.[289]

This interpretation would no doubt provoke most Ḥanbalīs. Ibn Taymiyya spilt much ink attempting to explain why it is imperative to reject doctrines which denude God of the attributes with which He describes Himself in the Qur'an and *ḥadīth.* Though it is true that al-Āqḥiṣārī shared the views of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim on particular aspects of religious practice, he could not be at greater odds with them on questions relating to theology, and specifically the attributes of God.

[289] *Majlis XXIV*, f. 72v-r.

Al-Āqḥiṣarī proceeds to highlight an historic dispute on whether this night should be revered more than other nights. There are many *ḥadīth*s apart from the one which introduces *Majlis XXIV* on the nobility of this night, and al-Āqḥiṣarī mentions that a number of the Successors (*Tābiᶜīn*) were known to have held the night in high esteem. (He mentions Khālid b. Miqdān, Maqḥūla and Luqmān b. ᶜĀmir among others). But the situation changed significantly once news of the importance of the night spread throughout the lands. Al-Āqḥiṣarī says that, at this point, the scholars of the Ḥijāz denied the excellence of the night, believing that anything to do with it was a *bidᶜa.* In a style that is typical of Muslim legalistic thinking, al-Āqḥiṣarī attempts to reconcile between two extremes:

> The truth is that if the believer occupies himself on that night in worship of various kinds, such as prayer, recitation, *dhikr* and invocation, then it is permitted and not disliked; however, to congregate on this night in the mosques, small and large, to offer supererogatory prayers in a congregation, as is the custom in our time, is reprehensible (*yukrah*). This is the view of al-Awzāᶜī, the imām, scholar and jurist of the people of Syria. To light many lamps and candles in both the small and great mosques on this night is not permitted (*lā yajūz*) because of what has been mentioned [in this regard] in the *Qaniyya*—that to light many lamps on the night of Barāt in the streets and souqs is an innovation (*bidᶜa*), as it is in the mosques.[290]

He then emphasises his earlier position, but this time in far stronger terms:

> To believe that any of this is pious (*qurba*) is from the greatest of innovations (*bidᶜa*) and the worst of evil acts (*sayyi'a*). Furthermore to congregate on this night for supererogatory prayer is a pernicious innovation (*bidᶜa qabīḥa*) which must be avoided (*yajibu al-ijtināb ᶜan-hu*) because the Jurists have agreed upon the reprehensibility of congregating for all supererogatory prayers except the *tarāwīḥ*

[290] *Majlis XXIV,* f. 72r.

> prayer, the prayer for rain (*ṣalāt al-istisqāʾ*) and the eclipse prayer (*ṣalāt al-kusūf*), with the condition that there are four besides the imām.[291]

After explaining that congregating for prayer on Barāt was not the practice of the Companions or the early Muslims, al-Āqḥiṣarī cites al-Ṭurṭūshī for the story of how it was inaugurated. According to this narrative, on this very night in the fourth Islamic century, a man from Nāblus entered the al-Aqṣā mosque and began to pray. Shortly afterwards he was joined by a second man, and then a third, and a fourth, and so on, until a large congregation built up. In the following year, the same prayer in congregation was performed, and this continued until news of it began to spread throughout the Muslim lands.

Finally, al-Āqḥiṣarī offers his advice to the believer who cannot change this situation yet recognises the obligation of enjoining good and forbidding evil. A person who cannot find a mosque where this reprehensible prayer is not being performed is better off praying at home. Now despite the fact that it is disliked to pray the obligatory prayer at home, this is a case, according to al-Āqḥiṣarī, where one would be swelling the numbers of the "People of Innovation" (*Ahl al-bid*ᶜ*a*), an act which is in itself prohibited. This is al-Āqḥiṣarī's general advice. He next addresses the people of knowledge specifically: they should be even more careful not to attend mosques where the Barāt prayer is being performed because this will inevitably be seen as a precedent worthy of imitation in the eyes of common folk (*al-*ᶜ*awwām*). Beyond this, one must feel a sense of disgust within his heart for the actions of the ignorant. This is considered by al-Āqḥiṣarī the very lowest degree of faith; it absolves someone who is

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[291] *Majlis XXIV*, f. 72r.

incapable of changing the custom of the people, and for which they would otherwise be accountable.[292]

Al-Āqḥiṣarī is thus in complete agreement with other Qāḍīzādeli revivalists on the matter of performing supererogatory prayers in congregation. Qāḍīzāde, Üṣṭüwānī and Wānī are all of the view that the practice of congregating for Raghā'ib, Barāt and Laylat al-Qadr is an innovation. The only prayers according to each which are acceptable to congregate for are the *tarāwīḥ, kusūf, witr* and *istisqā'*. There is, however, one final point to note about the nature of al-Āqḥiṣarī's view on such practices. According to him,

> It is not for anyone to claim that though such prayers are *bid^{c}a* they involve supplications and readings from the Qur'an and therefore [one may] hope for a reward commensurate with these supplications and readings. To such a person it is said, since prayers of this sort are innovations and misguided (*ḍalla*), what they contain in terms of supplications and readings are effectively the mixing of good actions with evil ones, which is an evil in itself, more distasteful than the first; therefore it is incumbent that such an action is avoided.[293]

Here he is arguably more rigid than his fellow activists, and even the views of Ibn Taymiyya on innovative rites of worship seem a notch less severe.

On shaking hands

[292] *Majlis XXIV*, f. 73v.

[293] *Majlis XIX*, f. 61r.

According to the Qāḍīzādelis, turning to shake the hand of a fellow Muslim after the completion of the obligatory prayer is an innovation in religion which should be shunned. There are two reasons that explain the preoccupation of the Qāḍīzādelis with this otherwise banal social exchange. The first is that it had become commonplace in Ottoman Turkey, so much so that the Qāḍīzādelis decided something had to be said about it. Second, its performance was widely considered to be a duty on all those praying in congregation; a novelty of this sort, which could not be supported by Prophetic tradition, would not be tolerated by the hardliners. This was just the combination of components for which the Qāḍīzādelis had opposed so many other religious and social practices. Yet it would be an error to consider the Qāḍīzādelis the first (or indeed the last) to have taken issue with the act of shaking hands after prayer. The issue first attracted the attention of jurists centuries earlier: Ibn al-Ḥājj speaks about it in his *Madkhal*; al-Nawawī, in his commentary on the Saḥīh of Muslim, also discusses it; and Ibn Taymiyya does too in his *Fatāwā.* The Qāḍīzādelis were well acquainted with these voices from the past and made frequent references to them in support of their own campaign against the practice. Kātib Çelebi in his *Mīzān* explains the context and background:

> Shaking hands was originally the *Sunna* when paying homage or on meeting. The noble Companions (the approval of God Almighty be on them one and all) used to shake hands when they met one another, and to say 'God pardon me and you!' There are many traditions of the Prophet to this effect [...] Later the practice fell into desuetude, and people came to do it only after prayer; in Turkey, mostly after the Friday prayer. As this was an innovation based on custom and use, certain preachers forbade it as being a heretical Shiite practice. A fetwa was sought, and the reply was this: the heretical Shiite practice is to shake hands after all five prayers every day. The shaking of hands after the Friday prayer is a special case. For it is better in the case of firmly-rooted innovations to temporize as far as possible, and to put people in the right. On this matter also discussion arose, though not to such an immoderate

> extent, and a few people abandoned the practice. Most people however regard it as a religious duty, particularly at festivals.[294]

It is not clear who issued the fatwa allowing the shaking of hands after Friday prayer; such a fatwa certainly would not have been issued by any one of the scholars associated with the Qāḍīzādelis, and in this regard, Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī is no different. He too preferred the stricter view, namely an absolute ban unless hand shaking was done in the social context of meeting and greeting. To do so after the Friday Prayer or after the Eid Prayer was an innovation to be shunned by the common folk and rebuked by the scholars. Citing *ḥadīth* such as, 'No two Muslims meet each other and shake hands except that their sins are forgiven before they separate,' is, according to al-Āqḥiṣārī, unjustifiable since it has no relevance to the context of the prayer. In fact, it is rejected on the basis of ᶜĀ'isha's narration, 'Whoever invents (*aḥdatha*) anything in this affair of ours shall have it rejected'.[295] Al-Āqḥiṣārī also mentions that the Shīᶜa shake hands after the prayer, perhaps to dissuade his Sunnī audience from imitating them. Al-Āqḥiṣārī invokes the authority of Ibn Ḥajar, Shāfiᶜī *ḥadīth* expert, and Ibn al-Ḥājj of the Mālikīs, both of whom considered shaking hands after prayer a reprehensible act. As part of his justification for opposing it, al-Āqḥiṣārī describes how far rooted the practice had become by his time:

> The people have now become so accustomed to this practice and are so entrenched in the belief that it is a binding *Sunna* that they do not permit the abandoning of it. It has even reached us that one of the well-known scholars has said that it is from the rites of Islam and so should not be left by the people of faith. Look, O people of

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[294] Kātib Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth,* p. 101.

[295] *Majlis L*, f. 137r.

> justice, if the belief of the elite is upon this, then what of the belief of the common folk?[296]

This sort of rhetoric is typical of the language of Qāḍīzādeli reformers more generally and reminds us in particular of Qāḍīzāde and Wānī Efendi. Over against each of these, Kātib Çelebi argued for a position of moderation, as was typical of his way with all of the issues that the Qāḍīzādelis had taken a hard-line position on. He agrees with Qāḍīzāde concerning the novelty of handshakes after the prayer and recommends that one does not initiate it. If one is turned to for a hand shake, then it is a greater evil to refuse, since this would offend a fellow believer, which is a sin worse than the act of shaking hands after prayer.[297] This is typical of Kātib Çelebi, whose guiding principle was always that one should accommodate norms which have become widespread as much as possible since it is unbecoming of a Muslim to oppose what has received the sanction of the majority. Al-Āqḥiṣārī's could not be any further from this position. His view is that one should stand up for truth even if it means one is alone in doing so:

> When an act runs contrary to the *Sunna* then there should be no consideration given to it or attention. Deeds contrary to the *Sunna* have been undertaken since time immemorial and so you should be extremely cautious of newly invented matters. Even if the majority has agreed upon a deed, you should not be deceived by their unanimity since [ultimately] it is upon something invented after the era of the Companions. In fact, you should investigate their states and deeds because the most knowledgeable of them and nearest in proximity to God—the Most High—are those who are most similar to them and most aware of their way. Among [the Companions] are those who took the religion [directly]; they are the source for transmitting the Sharīᶜa from the Owner of the Law.[298]

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[296] *Majlis L*, f. 137r.

[297] Kātib Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth,* pp. 101-102.

[298] *Majlis L,* f. 138v.

Al-Āqḥiṣārī goes on to cite Ibn al-Qayyim and Abū Shāma, the latter of whom is quoted as saying, 'The command to adopt the way of the majority means [to adopt the way of] truth and its people, even if those who cling to it are few and those who contravene it are many; this is since the truth is that which the first majority were upon—namely, the Companions—and so there is no consideration given to large numbers of people who are upon misguidance.'[299] Through motivational instructions like this it is plausible that al-Āqḥiṣārī was encouraging himself as much as he was attempting to encourage his reader.

Conclusion

The study of *bid*ᶜ*a* in the thought of al-Āqḥiṣārī has been revelatory. Firstly, the vexed question of whether the writings of Ibn Taymiyya had any influence upon seventeenth century Ottoman revivalism can finally be put to rest. The omission of Ibn Taymiyya's name from the texts of the period has been a key factor behind the dismissal of Taymiyyan influence in Ottoman lands. Al-Āqḥiṣārī's reliance on *Iqtidā' al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm,* as revealed by the textual study, is therefore an important and original contribution in this regard. Furthermore, this part of the study has attempted to show that al-Āqḥiṣārī, as well as Birgili, were influenced more deeply by Ibn Taymiyya than a cursory reading might suggest. They appear to have appropriated the rational arguments furnished by the Ibn Taymiyya in his *Iqtidā'* in order to support their own opposition to innovations. This level of Taymiyyan influence is another new insight.

[299] *Majlis L,* f. 138v.

The chapter highlights the importance of a systematic approach to reconstructing the thought-system of an historical figure: in this case, only after surveying the rational underpinnings of al-Āqḥiṣārī's opposition to *bid^{c}a* should a survey of the specific religious rites and customs that he opposed be undertaken. This approach allows for a more nuanced appreciation of why the Ottoman puritan was opposed to *bid^{c}a* and avoids reading him as simply a retrogressive thinker opposed to *bid^{c}a* in all of its forms from an obstinate obsession with tradition. This approach might serve as a model for future studies on Qāḍīzādeli personalities.

A final point for reflection is how to square al-Āqḥiṣārī's ostensible infatuation with uprooting religious innovations with the religious milieu of his time. How might we reconcile his position on *bid^{c}a* with his own advocacy of Sufism? The answer may yet again lie in Ottoman Naqshbandī Sufism, which has already proved a useful analytical framework for understanding al-Āqḥiṣārī's spiritual outlook. Though I am presently unable to draw upon an Ottoman Naqshbandī view on *bid^{c}a* from the same period, it is possible to draw a comparison between al-Āqḥiṣārī and Aḥmad Sirhindī, both of whom were contemporaries. In his *Maktūbāt,* in answer to a question on how *dhikr* should be performed, Sirhindī states clearly that he is opposed to audible *dhikr* because it is a *bid^{c}a*; in the following passage we also learn about how Sirhindī conceptualised *bid^{c}a*:

> I have been asked how it is that I forbid *dhikr* with a loud voice and condemn it as an innovation (*bid^{c}a*), but do not condemn many other things which had not existed at the time of the Prophet such as the shirt open in front (*libās farjī*) and pyjamas. Please note that the acts of the Prophet were of two kinds: those that were performed

> as ^{c}*ibāda,* an act of worship, and those that were done as ^{c}*urf* and ^{c}*āda,* habits and customs. The acts which were done as ^{c}*ibāda,* we consider deviations from them to be evil innovations, and condemn them strongly, for they are innovations in religion (*dīn*) and must be rejected. But the acts which were done as part of habit and custom, we do not regard deviations from them as innovation, and do not proscribe them. For they do not belong to religion (*dīn*); their existence or disappearance depends upon the custom of society rather than religion. Indeed the custom of some lands is often different to the customs of other lands; indeed, sometimes the customs of a single land can be variegated, depending upon the era; it is likely that to adhere to normal traditions can actually yield positive results and be a cause of happiness. May God make us stand firm upon adhering to the way of the Master of Messengers.[300]

Audible *dhikr* was not the only practice which Sirhindī opposed. Musical sessions (*samā^{c}*), spiritual dancing (*raqṣ*) and celebrating the birthday of the Prophet were all irreligious in his eyes. In various places in his *Maktūbāt,* Sirhindī referred to these practices as *shirk* and *kufr* as often as he would refer to them as *bid^{c}a.* Ansari argues that if we consider carefully the things which Sirhindī condemned as *bid^{c}a,* it is clear that they introduce things into the religion which have no basis in the sources of the religion— namely the Qur'an and *Sunna:*

> Sirhindī laments that the ^{c}ulamā' of the time who are guardians of religion and whose duty is to save the masses from *shirk* and *bid^{c}a* are themselves involved in those practices. 'The world is drowned', he says, 'in the sea of *bid^{c}a* and delights in its black acts; the ^{c}ulamā' of our time have become preachers of *bid^{c}a* and destroyers of the *Sunna.* No one has the courage to speak against *bid^{c}a* and revive the *Sunna.* Most of the ^{c}ulamā' lead people to *bid^{c}a,* and prove that they are commended and desirable'.[301]

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[300] Cited in Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah,* pp. 22-23. See also *Maktūbāt,* 1: 440.

[301] Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah,* p. 23.

The convergence between Sirhindī and al-Āqḥiṣārī on the problem of *bid*^{c}*a* is unmistakable and once more shows that, from the perspective of the Naqshbandī piety at least, al-Āqḥiṣārī's views on *bid*^{c}*a* would have resonated greatly.

CHAPTER FIVE: FORBIDDING EVIL

This chapter investigates an aspect of al-Āqḥiṣārī's thought which might rightly be perceived as an ultra-conservative approach to religion; it is also an aspect of his thought which has had the most enduring posthumous legacy and influence. Al-Āqḥiṣārī addresses issues relating to social behaviour, customary habits, politics and religious authority. Two aspects are brought to light in the following pages: first, that al-Āqḥiṣārī's interests were diverse; second, that he was quite prepared to advise the common man to take action in order to remedy a societal malady—and by force if nothing else will deliver the desired outcome. His rigidity and militancy must have been quite unlike anything known in Ottoman Turkey and begs the question as to whether he is responsible for the shift towards greater violence taken by the Qāḍīzādelis as they entered into the second phase of their revivalist agenda.

A Hard-line Agenda

The theme of 'enjoining good and forbidding evil' is a constant thread throughout al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Majālis* and establishes him firmly as a Qāḍīzādeli revivalist. The sections below provide case-studies as to how this principle is invoked within al-Āqḥiṣārī's writing, with important features coming to the fore such as his hard-line tone and rigorist polemic against various Muslim collectives which he thinks have veered away from the path of truth.

On coffee and tobacco

Coffee first arrived in the Ottoman Empire from the Yemen in around 947/1540 and tobacco from the Americas during the same century. The two substances, rather inevitably, became popular within a short space of time, and Istanbul was soon saturated with *kahvehane*s built as

places for the consumption of both. William Biddulph, in his *Travels of Certayne Englishmen in Africa, Asia, etc...Begunne in 1600 and by some of them finished—this yeere 1608* (London, 1609), gave a vivid description of the coffeehouse, at a time when it was unknown in contemporary Europe:

> Their most common drinke is *Coffa,* which is a blacke kinde of drinke, made of a kind of Pulse like Pease, called *Coaua....*It is accounted a great curtesie amongst them to give unto their friends when they come to visit them, a Fin-ion or Scudella of *Coffa,* which is more holesome than toothsome, for it causeth good concoction, and driveth away drowsinesse. Some of them will also drink Bersh or Opium, which maketh them forget themselves, and talk idely of Castles in the Ayre, as though they saw Visions and heard Revelations. Their *Coffa* houses are more common than Ale-houses in England; but they use not so much to sit in the houses, as on benches on both sides the streets, neere unto a *Coffa* house, every man with his Fin-ionful; which being smoking hot, they use to put it to their Noses & Eares. And then sup it off by leasure, being full of idle and Ale-house talke while they are amongst themselves drinking it; if there be any news, it is talked of there.[302]

The coffeehouse in the seventeenth century was obviously no Starbucks or Costa; as described above, the Turkish customer could order anything from coffee to opium. This helps to understand why coffee was viewed by some observers as equivalent to narcotics. Indeed Francis Bacon (1561-1626) classified “coffa” with opium, tobacco and betel, as a fortifying and analeptic drug rather than a beverage, considering it as such because of how it was consumed:

> Certainly this berry coffa, the root and leaf betel, the leaf tobacco, and the tear of poppy (opium) of which the Turks are great takers (supposing it expelleth all fear). Do all condense the spirits, and make them strong and alleger. But it seemeth they

[302] Cited in B.A. Weinberg, BK. Bealer, *The World of Caffeine: The Science and Culture of the World's Most Popular Drug* (New York; London: Routledge, 2001), p. 149.

> were taken after several manners; for coffa and opiuim are taken down, tobacco but in smoke, and betel is but champed in the mouth with a little lime.[303]

Muslim jurists felt compelled to respond to these two new substances that the Sharīᶜa was apparently silent on. Varying degrees of response issued forth from jurists, ranging from absolute interdiction to complete license. Often the most underdeveloped arguments were presented by jurists in support of their views.[304] As more knowledge surfaced about the harmful physical effects of smoking tobacco, the more astute jurists who stood opposed to smoking began to bolster their fatwas against tobacco by incorporating the latest medical evidence available to them. The greater the sophistication of the fatwa, the more likely it was that the authorities would initiate practical legal measures against tobacco.

In some parts of the *Majālis,* as well as the *Risāleh Dukhāniyye,* al-Āqḥiṣārī presents what must surely have been the most sophisticated and developed fatwa against tobacco in the seventeenth century. His arguments are drawn from the Qur'an, *ḥadīth,* medicine and a deeply-set mistrust of the West from whence it came. He describes it in no uncertain terms as, 'the substance which originated from the infidels, the enemies of the people of faith [...] an affliction affecting all of mankind, be it the elite or the commonality'.[305] Though representative of the general position of

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[303] Cited Weinberg, *The World of Caffeine*, pp. 149-150.

[304] M.A. Nadwi explains that most jurists likened tobacco to wine in sinfulness and harmfulness and accordingly considered it proscribed. He mentions that among the Ḥanafīs who took this view were al-Shurunbulālī, al-Musayyarī and al-Ḥaṣkafī. It was the use of the analogical method which led them to this judgment. In contrast to this view, scholars such as ᶜAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, the 17th century Syrian Ḥanafī and Naqshbandī, judged smoking to be permissible (*mubāḥ*) on the basis that it is dissimilar to wine (a kind of negative analogy): he argued that since it doesn't lead to inebriation, the loss of intellect, the clouding of the mind or harm to the body, it cannot be forbidden. For more on the earliest juristic responses to tobacco, see the forward to Michot's *Against Smoking,* pp. x-xii.

[305] Michot, *Against Smoking,* p. 45.

the ^{c}ulamā', one senses that for a man already lamenting a society which had departed from an acceptable standard of religiosity, 'the introduction of tobacco into an Ottoman empire must have meant a societal cataclysm of satanic proportions'.[306]

We are availed of a detailed survey of al-Āqḥiṣārī's fatwa by Michot's translation of the *Dukhāniyye.* Here only the key points raised in the fatwa are presented. The first proof for the prohibition of tobacco furnished by al-Āqḥiṣārī is Qur'anic. Rather than formulating an analogy by extending the Qur'anic prohibition of wine, al-Āqḥiṣārī decides to employ what appears to be a juristic maxim: 'If no advantage—religious or worldly—derives from the [freely] chosen (*ikhtiyārī*) action of a legally responsible person (*mukallaf*), such an action oscillates between futility (*^{c}abath*), amusement (*la^{c}ib*) and caprice (*lahw*)'.[307] For the author of the *Dukhāniyye*, the Qur'an makes no distinction between these three futile actions—each one is equally pernicious. Since smoking tobacco affords no religious benefit, and also lacks any worldly benefit since it neither satiates nor possesses medicinal properties, it is from those actions done purely from caprice. This alone would be sufficient in al-Āqḥiṣārī's mind for it to be considered prohibited (*ḥarām*). Al-Āqḥiṣārī was not satisfied with this vague justification alone—and in any case it would unlikely appease those already taken to the view that the gates of *ijtihād* had shut and therefore all issues unresolved by the earliest jurists— smoking being among them – should remain allowed. He continues to bolster his argument by citing Avicenna and Galen, medical authorities who spoke about the 'desiccating effects of smoke on bodily humours', which in turn

[306] Michot, *Against Smoking,* p. 22.

[307] Michot, *Against Smoking,* pp. 45-46.

lead to sickness. Due to the obligation to protect oneself from harm, says al-Āqḥiṣārī, it is not permissible to use tobacco. The fatwa continues, revealing more pronouncedly al-Āqḥiṣārī's legal acumen—he develops his argument methodically, drawing upon jurisprudential theory wherever appropriate, and is obviously familiar with the body of earlier legal judgements on similar noxious substances which he renders analogous to tobacco.

It might be suggested that al-Āqḥiṣārī's argument lacks originality since he draws heavily from the fatwa of his contemporary, the Mālikī shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Laqānī (d. 1041/1631), one of the very first issued against tobacco. Michot insists that, notwithstanding al-Āqḥiṣārī's debt to al-Laqānī, he should be given credit for putting his (unreferenced) borrowings to good use as he 'works out a far better conceived, and convincing, indictment against smoking than the Egyptian scholar.'[308] Indeed for the most part the fatwa is nothing less than a juristically rigorous and robust statement against smoking— as such it reinforces the view of al-Āqḥiṣārī as a jurist who was at the pinnacle of his profession. Is there any point at which his more hard-line rhetoric surfaces? Indeed there is: 'Every individual, the jurists have said, on whom an abominable smell is found by which one is offended, it is obligatory to expel him from the mosque, even by dragging him by his hand and his foot—but not by his beard or the hair of his head. In this time, it is consequently obligatory to expel from the mosques—the small ones and the great ones—many of the imāms and muezzins on whom there is an abominable smell.'[309]

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[308] Michot, *Against Smoking,* p. 34.

[309] Michot, *Against Smoking,* pp. 53-54.

Judging by his largely underdeveloped argument against coffee, it seems that the substance was not viewed by al-Āqḥiṣārī as quite the threat that he thought tobacco posed to the health of the individual and the wider social fabric of his homeland. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that he makes a short statement on it in the *Dukhāniyye.*

> Likewise, also, for coffee, this new invention which exerts a general fascination and whose calamitous [vogue] is so widespread that it has become the cause of various sorts of acts of disobedience and various types of forbidden behaviour. Using it necessarily forces one to observe these forbidden behaviours during gatherings, to mingle with the fools and the vile, to receive it from the hands of beardless youths, to touch their hands, and to commit acts of disobedience. Now, all this violates manliness (*murū'a*) and brings down probity (*ᶜadāla*). "It is not permitted to anybody," the legists have said, "to contribute to the tarnishing of his probity by committing actions demonstrating his vileness." "Everything," they also said, "which is the cause of an act of disobedience is prohibited, and everything whose corruptive nature is known to be like the corruptive nature of things with which a [divine] threat is associated, or a Legal sanction, or a curse, is a great sin." Now, how little is coffee free from any of these [aspects]! It is thus incumbent upon the intelligent person to keep away from it, totally; all the more so as, by continuing to drink it, some harm is produced which affects the body when one abstains from it.[310]

Al-Āqḥiṣārī is able on this occasion to reinforce his own view by citing a fatwa of Abū Suᶜūd Efendi, the Shaykh al-Islām and Muftī of the Rūm, highlighting perhaps his ability to acknowledge someone who he would otherwise have agreed very little with.[311] Abū Suᶜūd's position is relayed by al-Āqḥiṣārī: 'To issue a fatwa allowing something which the adepts of debauchery apply themselves eagerly to engage in is among the things that anybody afraid of God Most High and fearing Him would hardly ever undertake!'[312] We know from Kātib Çelebi

[310] Michot, *Against Smoking,* pp. 64-65.

[311] Ibid, p. 65. See also Çavuşoğlu, 'The Kadizādeli Movement', p. 218.

[312] For Abū Suᶜūd's fatwa see M.E. Duzdağ's *Şeyhülislām Ebusuᶜūd Efendi'nin fetvalarina gore Kanunī devrinde Osmanli hayati - Fetāvī-yi Ebusuᶜūd Efendi* (Istanbul: Şūle Yayinlari, 1998).

that Abū Suᶜūd Efendi also issued the notorious command that ships bringing in coffee beans should have holes bored into them so that they sink with their loads.[313] Would insight into the future, of an age when people would be sat at the breakfast table pouring boiling water over their Nescafe instant coffee granules have made any difference to the fatwas of muftis like al-Āqḥiṣārī? As much as one would like to think so, for rigorist pietism of this sort it is highly unlikely.

On the corruption of the authorities

Much has been written by Ottomanists on the disintegration of the Ottoman imperial hierarchy during the post-Suleimanic age. The disintegration extended beyond the Seraglio of course, besetting the army and the learned institution, the ᶜIlmiyye. Interest in the decline of the ᶜIlmiyye can be traced back to 16th century chronicles; historians such as ᶜAlī (1541-1599) and Selānikī (d. 1600) both speak about it, criticising the body of ᶜulamā' as a whole who did little to prevent the decline, and discussing how corruption pervaded the ᶜIlmiyye institution to such an extent that it ultimately resulted in its near complete breakdown.[314]

None were more critical of the moral laxity and decline in religious authority of the ᶜIlmiyye than certain members of the ᶜulamā'. In this regard, Meḥmed Birgili is most noteworthy. In several works written during the latter part of his career he made significant challenges to what

[313] Kātib Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth,* p. 60.

[314] There is a very useful chapter on the breakdown of the ᶜIlmiyye in Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy', pp. 68-77.

he saw as unacceptable practices given sanction by the Ottoman religious establishment. One of the most significant challenges he made was to the fatwa permitting cash trusts. Sometime between 1546 and 1547, Çivizāde, Qāḍīᶜaskar[315] of Rumelia, issued a fatwa stating that cash trusts were *ḥarām,* and managed to persuade Sultan Süleymān I to abolish them by decree. Subsequently, the Muftī of Istanbul Abū Suᶜūd Efendi saw that such a lucrative means of earning should be granted licence; he thus responded with his own fatwa pronouncing them valid.[316] Finding in Abū Suᶜūd's fatwa the legal justification he needed, the Sultan swiftly countermanded the first decree which outlawed the cash trusts with a second which returned their original legal status. At this point, Birgili Efendi, who had already composed a work on the issue, *Inqādh al-hālikīn,*[317] responded directly to Abū Suᶜūd's fatwa with a definitive rebuttal, *Sayf al-Ṣārim,* in which he maintained that the Shaykh al-Islām was in error and that the usury involved in cash loans made on these trusts was completely outlawed by Ḥanafī law.[318] The second significant intervention of Birgili was his fatwa condemning those ᶜulamā' who would take payments for reciting the Qur'an or for praying over the deceased. In the *Īqāẓ al-nā'imīn was ifhām al-qāṣirīn,*

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[315] The Qāḍīᶜaskar, literally 'judge of the army', was a position which dates back to the era of Murād I (d. 1389), who made the first appointment in Bursa in 765/1363. He designated the holder of the post with authority for military jurisdiction and supervisory powers over all *qāḍī*s. Whereas to begin with, the holder of the post was effectively the leader of the ᶜulamā', by the middle of the 16th century, thanks to the activity Abū Suᶜūd Efendi, the Mufti of Istanbul came to wield ultimate authority over all the ᶜulamā' of the Empire. See Gy. Káldy Nagy, 'Kāḍīᶜaskar', in *EI*².

[316] See fn.81for Abū Suᶜūd's justification of cash trusts.

[317] This epistle insists on the illegality of making cash endowments, other than at the time of death, in order to secure religious reward. For more details on this text, see Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy', p. 142ff.

[318] C. Imber notes that Birgili and Çivizade were both closer to the mainstream position in the Ḥanafī school and therefore correct in their views. However, Abū Suᶜūd invoked the *uṣūlī* principle of *maṣlaḥa,* public interest—he believed that it was not in the public interest to abolish cash trusts. See *Ebu's-Su'ud,* pp. 144-145. For details on the cash trust controversy refer to J. Mandeville's paper, 'Usurious Piety'.

he maintained that using money earned from such means was *ḥarām* and had no place in religion.[319]

In the *Majālis,* al-Āqḥiṣārī shares much of the sentiment expressed by Birgili in his epistles prohibiting both cash trusts and the receipt of money for reciting the Qur'an. He is perhaps even more stinging than Birgili of ᶜulamā who sanction such means of income, condemning severely both those sanctioning the act and those actively participating in it. For him, the ᶜulamā' have the role of curing people's hearts, yet their own hearts are diseased. Moreover, instead of being moral guides reminding the commonality of the Day of Judgement and Hell, they corrupt them even more by charming them and deluding them with idle hopes in the divine mercy. To cap this, they then charge money for their services!

> The physicians, these are the ulema and, in this time, they have become sick, seriously sick, to the point of being unable to treat themselves, not to speak of treating others. This is the reason why the disease is general, the therapy has been interrupted, and the creatures are perishing. Or, rather, the physicians keep themselves busy with various ways of misguiding [people]. Would to God, if only, as they do not improve matters, they were not corrupting them! If only they were keeping silent and were not talking! When they speak, in their religious exhortations, they indeed do not aim at anything else than to win the hearts of the commonality. Now, they do not obtain access to them but by making mention of the hope [in God] and the [divine] mercy, as that is more pleasing to the ears and lighter on [human] nature. The creatures thus leave their sessions of religious exhortation (*majlis wa'ẓ*) with, as sole profit, an overplus of insolence in committing actions of disobedience. Now, as long the physician is like that, the sick are led to perish because of the remedy, as it is administered in the wrong manner.[320]

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[319] See Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy', pp. 142-143; Çavuşoğlu also has a useful section on the cash trust controversy in her thesis, 'The Kadizādeli Movement', p. 55ff.

[320] Cited in Michot, *Against Smoking,* pp. 15-16.

Given his warning to ᶜulamā' who use their own religious gatherings, *Majālis,* for the purposes of making a living, thereby tarnishing the good name of religion, one cannot help wondering whether in some way al-Āqḥiṣārī in part wrote *Majālis al-abrār* with the aim of recovering something of the prestige that the sermon as a medium of instruction had lost. Certainly in the following lines he is damning of those gatherings which are supposed to fill hearts with faith, but instead seem only to fill the pockets of the sermonists.

> One ought to know that when the ulema, in the sessions which they devote to knowledge, solicit something from the people, doing so is not licit for them, as this is earning something by means of a scholarly activity and an action of obedience [to God], no matter whether they solicit [it] for themselves or for others. Among the blameworthy solicitations is the fact of offering a little in order to take a lot, as is done when one is invited to weddings or circumcisions, as well as the fact of taking care of [someone else's] sheep with the intention of keeping its offspring, as it is said that it is about this that His words, Exalted is He, were sent down: "And show not favour, seeking worldly gain!"[321]

Those deserving the position of wāᶜiẓ

In *Majlis LXXXII* (Who should be appointed preacher and who should be prevented) Aḥmad al-Āqḥiṣārī describes the qualifications of a worthy preacher: 'Whoever is found to possess knowledge (*ᶜilm*), religiosity (*diyāna*) and sound creed (*ḥusn al-ᶜaqīda*) should be granted permission (*yu'adhdhan lahu*) to exhort the masses. One not possessing these attributes should not be granted permission for fear that he will lead people to innovation (*bidᶜa*) and misguidance

[321] Ibid.

(*ḍalāla*), just as is happening in our time."[322] In typical reductionist style, al-Āqḥiṣārī divides those who exhort the masses into three types: The first has been virtually non-existent for centuries according to him—this is the leader (*amīr*) who stands up and personally exhorts the people. Such amīrs, claims al-Āqḥiṣārī, are only to be found in early Islam; here too is an obvious intimation that Muslim government has moved away from the Islamic ideal. The second is present but apparently still rare: he is the state-appointed preacher. The last type of preacher, by far the most common according to al-Āqḥiṣārī, is the arrogant (*mukhtāl*), self-appointed prattler (*fuḍūlī*) who craves leadership. This sort of a person preaches only in order to capture the hearts of his audience; his attention is only on the mercy of God rather than His punishment. People therefore leave his session feeling more encouraged to commit sins.[323] This sort of *wā^{c}iẓ,* who typically infuses his exhortation with innovation (*bid^{c}a*), should be prevented. No one should be in attendance at such sessions (*majlis*) unless intending to refute the heresies being uttered. He next describes the aim of the path of *wa^{c}ẓ* and *naṣīḥa*:

> The *wā^{c}iẓ* should be bent on inviting people away from the temporal (*dunya*) towards the Hereafter, and from sin (*ma^{c}ṣiya*) towards obedience (*ṭā^{c}a*) and from sickness (*maraḍ*) to certainty (*qanā^{c}a*). He instils in them a love for the Hereafter and an abhorrence for the temporal; he instructs them on ritual practice (*^{c}ibāda*) and God-consciousness (*taqwā*) since most are predisposed to straying from the path of the Law (*minhaj al-shar^c*) and hastening to whatever displeases God, the Exalted.[324]

Any preacher whose exhortation is not thus characterised is a preacher of evil (*wabāl*). It is a duty on the one possessing strength and ability to remove him from the pulpit (*minbar*)of the

[322] *Majlis LXXXII,* f. 226r.

[323] *Majlis LXXXII,* f. 227v.

[324] *Majlis LXXXII,* f. 228v.

Muslims, in accordance with the principle of enjoining good and forbidding evil (*al-amr bi-l-ma*ᶜ*rūf wa l-nahy* ᶜ*an al-munkar*).

It is clear that al-Āqḥiṣārī had little faith in the authorities' ability to remedy the problem of arrogant and ignorant preachers presiding over the mosque pulpits. As Michot notes, he believed that the quality of leadership had declined since the earliest times; it follows that the appointees of the state reflected the overall drop in standards.[325] More serious than this, he accused the authorities of not following the Islamic Law, which was tantamount to accusing them of disbelief (*kufr*). He therefore probably held the view that the fate of the religion rested in the hands of those credible and sincere religious scholars, counting himself among them no doubt, as well as every sincere individual, irrespective of their social standing.

Tyranny of the Authorities

The job of the true scholar and *wā*ᶜ*iẓ* is not only to admonish and advise the common folk about the importance of adhering to the Sharīᶜa; forbidding evil requires that advice is also directed at the authorities. Even the Sultan is deserving of chastisement if he is seen to be failing in his duty as shadow of God on earth. The Qāḍīzādeli revivalists did not shy away from the duty of admonishing the ruler even when other scholars were prepared to turn a blind eye to many *shar*ᶜ*ī* transgressions of the state. Qāḍīzāde himself composed a rather bold treatise on just governance,

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[325] Michot, *Against Smoking,* p. 17

in the knowledge that one who offends the Sultan is liable to be executed without judicial inquiry. His *Tāj al-rasā'il wa minhāj al wasā'il,*[326] written in Ottoman Turkish and presented to Murād IV, was a four-part epistle which introduced the political theory (*siyāsa sharᶜiyya*) of Ibn Taymiyya as a standard of how just rule is to be dispensed, the position and rights of non-Muslim subjects in Islamic society, the collection of land tax (*kharāj*) and *jizya,* the sources of revenue of the treasury (*bayt al-māl*) and a commentary of a text by Aristotle on the art of war. It seems his aim in presenting this work to the Sultan was to point out to him just how far the government had strayed from the Sharīᶜa. Lest the Sultan take offence at this circumlocutory criticism of his ability to rule with justice, Qāḍīzāde presented a second, refashioning his advice within an ode. His *Qaṣīda,* said to have impressed the Sultan to such an extent that he launched the Rewān campaign as a result, is also full of insightful couplets decrying Ottoman moral decline amongst the ᶜulamā' especially.[327]

Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī was also of the view that admonishing the authorities was the unshirkable duty of the ᶜulamā'. Moreover he seems to have taken full satisfaction in doing so, his own manner appearing much more severe and vituperative than any of his fellow revivalists. In *Majlis LXXX*—'Regarding the appearance of tribulations and contraventions of the Law'—he calls for the Sharīᶜa to be implemented comprehensively by the authorities, not partially, admixed with custom and caprice. Noting the faith al-Āqḥiṣārī placed in the Sharīᶜa, and particularly his confidence in its capability to bring about a just order, Michot says*,* 'For all those

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[326] Qāḍīzāde, *Tāj al-rasā'il,* Suleymaniye Library, MS. *Haci Mahmud Efendi 1926*.

[327] Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy'*,* pp. 155-156.

who see the Sharīᶜa as a totalitarian system of law, it will be a surprise to read Aḥmad al-Rūmī's call for its implementation as a way to curb the despotism and injustice of sultans and cadis. A barrier against tyranny—that is indeed how our author sees the "Muḥammadan Way/Law *(sharᶜ)*'.[328]

Al-Āqḥiṣārī paints the picture of an Ottoman government and judiciary which had forgotten the rule of law; Ottoman institutions exercising arbitrary force over the populace, despotic and far-removed from Muḥammadan ethics. In contradistinction to Kātib Çelebi, who believed it useless to oppose customs which had become firmly rooted in society, al-Āqḥiṣārī believed that customary practice, when allowed to infiltrate the decision making process of the authorities, becomes the mainstay of tyrannical governments and policies. For al-Āqḥiṣārī there is no justification for this preference of custom over the Sharīᶜa—in fact, when governments make decisions based on sources other than the Sharīᶜa they betray Islam. About this, Michot says, 'By saying so, [al-Āqḥiṣārī] could be presented as being as radical as Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathīr anathematizing the Mongol Īlkhāns following the *Yasa* of Genghis Khān in preference to the Sharīᶜa, or as the modern Islamists fomenting rebellion against their governments when the latter substitute foreign, man-made, legislations for the divine one. Just like Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Kathīr or these Islamists, Aḥmad al-Rūmī most probably has in mind Qur'anic verses like *al-Mā'ida*—V, 44, *Those who do not judge by what God has sent down—it is they who are the faithless*.'[329] The following passage, from *Majlis LXXX,* illuminates al-Āqḥiṣārī's position on the authorities:

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[328] Michot, *Against Smoking,* pp. 17-18.

[329] Michot, *Against Smoking,* p. 19.

As injustice and corruption overcome them, it is also likely that the [authorities] do not comply with the Way/Law (*shar*^{c}) in their governments (*ḥukūmāt*). Rather, they depart from it in favour of [various] species of injustice and policies (*siyāsāt*). They spill blood and seize properties without right and believe that they are right in committing these sins. And they do not know that, by believing that, they depart from Islam. Sometimes, they crucify the thief and kill him, believing that it is permitted to crucify him and to kill him. By believing that, they become unbelievers because the [Legal] punishment (*ḥadd*), for the thief, is not to crucify him and to kill him. Rather, his punishment is to cut off his hand, because of His words, Exalted is He: 'As for the thief, both male and female, cut off their hands.' Sometimes, their king becomes angry with one of them and he commands [his people] to kill him without any reason obliging to kill him. So they kill him, believing that his command is right, and a duty for them (*wājib* ^{c}*alay-him*). By believing that, they become unbelievers, as '[There is] no obedience to a creature while disobeying the Creator', according to what is reported in the *ḥadīth* [...] This being so, one must know that many of the authorities (*walī*) of our time and of the cadis of our age have gone out of *(hajara)* the Muḥammadan Way/Law (*shar*^{c}) and invented (*aḥdatha*) an unsatisfactory path, which they called "custom" (^{c}*urf*). Acting on its basis has so spread among them that the Way/Law (*shar'*) is almost refused. Indeed, they do not decide a case by simply [following] the Way/Law (*bi-maḥḍ al-shar*^{c}), without mixing custom [with it], but they decide many cases by simply [following] custom *(bi-maḥḍ al-*^{c}*urf)*, without mixing the Way/Law [with it]! And they believe that, by simply [following] the Way/Law, order (*niẓām*) will not be achieved and the situation of humans will not be made right. They say so openly and they do not consider it reprehensible![330]

The passage above not only reveals the views of al-Āqḥiṣārī on certain social practices, political realities and the role of religious authority, but also, and in some ways more importantly, the extent to which al-Āqḥiṣārī was an advocate of activism over against political quietism and apathy. This is so whether we understand activism from the doctrinal perspective qua enjoining good and forbidding evil, or in the sense that it has been used to describe post-18th century revivalist movements, qua political activism. What we observe in al-Āqḥiṣārī's writing is a juxtaposition of Sufism with a form of activism—at times contiguous with militancy—that is at

[330] Michot, *Against Smoking,* pp. 19-21. See also *Majlis LXXX,* f. 221v-r.

once striking and unprecedented for its age. Indeed there are implications for this convergence of Sufism with activism for the still unresolved debate on Neo-Sufism. The following section will argue that an understanding of al-Āqḥiṣārī's thought has significant implications for this debate.

Neo-Sufism Again

Polemic over Neo-Sufism is one of the recurring themes engaging scholars working on 18th and 19th century Islamic revivalist movements. The term describes a new form of Sufism that emerged in this period, which was to some extent demysticised and also rooted in the Qur'an and *ḥadīth*.[331] According to Rahman, widely considered to have coined the term, Neo-Sufism was a form of spirituality 'largely stripped of its ecstatic and metaphysical character and content, replaced by a content which was nothing else than the postulates of the orthodox.'[332] By 'postulates of the orthodox', Rahman meant the specific influence of the ᶜulamā', who emphasised upon the 'original moral factor and puritanical self-control' in Sufism, 'especially at the expense of the extravagant features of popular ecstatic Sufism'.[333] Rahman believed that Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim were the avant-garde of this new trend.[334] For him, they would demonstrate the possibility of delivering Sufism from innovative practice whilst maintaining

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[331] On Neo-Sufism, see J.S. Trimimgham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); *The Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam,* edited by Nehemia Levtzion and John O. Voll (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987); John O. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World,* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1982).

[332] Rahman, *Islam,* 2nd Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 206.

[333] Rahman, *Islam,* p. 206.

[334] Rahman, *Islam*, p. 195.

many of the claims of intellectual Sufism and employing the whole range of essential Sufi terminology.

In his own contribution on this subject, Rahman surveyed various revivalist movements, including the Wahhābīs of Arabia, the Indian reform movement of Sayyid Aḥmad Barelwī, the Idrīsī Brotherhood of Morocco and the Sanūsiyya. For him each movement constituted an example of reformed Sufism. Indeed many of these groups adopted the same name, *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya,* the Path of Muḥammad. Whilst Rahman was sure that the similarities between these "re-oriented" Sufi groups was no accident, he lamented the lack of evidence which could support a causal connection between them.[335] Rahman was also keen to underline the danger in generalising about these revivalist phenomena, citing Sayyid Aḥmad's movement as an example. He argued that in all probability,

> The puritanical trends which had been originally present in the Indian reform school had already become accentuated in India because of the emphasis on ḥadīth and the struggle to rid the Muslims of superstitious cults which were seen to be an inroad of Hinduism into Islam. In the activist hands of Sayyid Aḥmad, a zealous crusader, this becomes the perfect analogue of Arabian Wahhābism.[336]

After providing several other examples of pre-modern puritanical reform, and pointing out the problem of explaining them away as mere off-shoots of Wahhābīsm, Rahman eventually

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[335] Voll too perceived a clear focus on the Prophet Muhammad in the type of Sufism emerging—the tradition of the *al-Ṭarīqat al-Muḥammadiyya* being an important dimension of this—and concluded that the study of this dimension in particular could make intelligible the frequent association of Neo-Sufism with *ḥadīth* studies in eighteenth-century revivalism.

[336] Rahman, *Islam,* p. 203.

conceded that the only way to view the phenomenon of pre-modern reform in different parts of the Muslim world is as something 'analogous but otherwise ubiquitous'.[337]

In the early 1990s some scholars began to question the postulates of the neo-Sufi hypothesis, arguing that it lacked historiographical evidence to support its distinction between post-18th century *ṭarīqa*s and their classical antecedents. O'Fahey and Radtke have perhaps expended most effort in this direction.[338] Although conceding that there may be some semantic utility in the term for describing certain new organisational phenomena that appeared in various areas of the Muslim world in the 18th and 19th century, they advised extreme caution when using it for the intellectual content of these phenomena.[339] The Sufism of Shaykh Aḥmad Idrīs, described by Rahman as the representative of Neo-Sufism *par excellence,*[340] is shown by O'Fahey to be at

[337] Rahman, *Islam,* p. 206.

[338] R. O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint* and O'Fahey and Radtke, 'Neo-Sufism Reconsidered', *Der Islam,* 70 (1993), pp. 52-87.

[339] See O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint*, esp. Chapter 1.

[340] Rahman, *Islam,* p. 207.

odds with many of the traits said to be common to neo-Sufi movements.[341] O'Fahey notes that in regards to the intellectual content of neo-Sufism, very little basic research has been done; many of the writings of the leading figures have yet to be published and studied, and in many cases they have yet to be found.[342]

Kim has argued that both the proponents and critics of the concept of Neo-Sufism are unanimously agreed about the 'broader social and political changes that have necessitated the shift from the local-based and ecstatic-weighted forms of Sufism to urban-centred, Shari'a-oriented, activist and sober varieties.'[343] Whilst this may be true, we can no doubt anticipate much more in the future both in favour of and in opposition to the neo-Sufi hypothesis.

While an investigation of the influence of al-Āqḥiṣārī's thought on later neo-Sufism would be deserving of its own further research, it is worth exploring the light that this study might throw

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[341] Based on the studies of Rahman, Trimmingham, B.G. Martin and Voll, O'Fahey and Radtke summarise the key dimensions of Neo-Sufism as follows:

I. Rejection of "popular" ecstatic Sufi practices such as dancing, the "noisy" *dhikr,* saint worship and the visiting of saints' tombs.
II. Rejection of Ibn al-ᶜArabī's teachings, especially his doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd.*
III. Rejection of the *murshid/murīd* relationship and the hierarchical mystical Way leading to *fatḥ* or "illumination"; emphasis on moral and social teaching.
IV. "Union" with the spirit of the Prophet, with a general emphasis on the "Muḥammadan Way".
V. Legitimation of the position of the order's founder through his having received prayers, litanies and his authority generally directly from the Prophet.
VI. Creation of mass organisations hierarchically-structured under the authority of the founder and his family.
VII. Renewed emphasis on *ḥadīth* studies.
VIII. Rejection of *taqlīd* and the assertion of the right to exercise *ijtihād.*
IX. The will to take political and military measures in defence of Islam.

This list, together with a detailed discussion of the neo-Sufi hypothesis, is in O'Fahey and Radtke, 'Neo-Sufism Reconsidered', p. 57.

[342] O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Shaykh,* p. 2.

[343] H.C. Kim, 'The Nature and Role of Sufism in Contemporary Islam: A Case Study of the Life, Thought and Teachings of Fethullah Gülen', unpublished doctoral thesis, Temple University, 2008, p.26.

upon this subject. Firstly, to understand the juxtaposition of Sufism and activism which is present throughout al-Āqḥiṣārī's work is not easy. I have gone to some lengths to highlight the similarity between Naqshbandī Sufism and al-Āqḥiṣārī's conceptualisation of spirituality; the possibility even that Naqshbandī orthodoxy might have somehow informed his ultra-traditionalist understanding of *bid*ᶜ*a.* Yet for all the apparent similarities, al-Āqḥiṣārī evades any label that we might try to apply to him. The fact that he makes no mention of the Naqshbandī order, coupled with the mode of activism which he advocated, make it unlikely that he was a Naqshbandī. Yet at the same time, he does not present an approach to Sufism which might be described as demysticised; his schema of *fanā'* which has been considered above is a clear example of why it would be incorrect to view him as a pre-modern Wahhābī. Eclectic Sufism is perhaps one way to describe al-Āqḥiṣārī's approach, but this does not really account for so much else that he integrated into his understanding of the spiritual path. Whilst the content may not be easily described, the influence which it would come to exert is quite dramatic. And it should not be forgotten that the Qāḍīzādeli movement as a whole, as well as al-Āqḥiṣārī specifically, are relevant here.

Qāḍīzādeli influence in territories beyond Ottoman Turkey began at least as early as the 18th century. Birgili's *al-Ṭarīqa al-Muḥammadiyya,* which had already gained hallowed status in Ottoman Turkey, gained reverential status in some of the most important capitals of Islamdom, including Cairo and Delhi. Birgili's reformist outlook would contribute to both the form as well as the content of revivalist movements elsewhere. *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya,* which for Birgili meant a reformed Sufism that embraced both spiritual journeying and social activism, and was

anchored in the Qur'an, the *ḥadīth* and the wisdom of the *Salaf*, was a vision taken up by other revivalists.[344]

As for al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Majālis al-abrār,* whereas in post-seventeenth century Ottoman Turkey it was virtually forgotten, it was able to find renewed life within the Indian reform movements of the 19th century. Al-Āqḥiṣārī's spirit of activism appealed to those in posterity who possessed a similar zeal for the revolutionary, and who found his writing applicable to their own social context. There are two notable instances of al-Āqḥiṣārī's influence in posterity, both of which are connected with India. The first, chronologically, was via a pamphlet written in Persian which made extensive use of *Majālis al-abrār—al-Balāgh al-mubīn fī aḥkām rabb al-ᶜālamīn—The Manifest Proclamation Concerning the Rulings of the Lord of the Worlds* [hereafter, *al-Balāgh al-mubīn*].[345] The text is polemical in nature; its author was opposed to a plethora of religious practices and innovations which he believed corrupted Islam. It includes a catalogue of the objectionable practices of Indian Muslims connected with the cult of saints; a comparison is drawn between these practices and the objectionable practices of Heathens, Jews, Christians and

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[344] Two studies in particular highlight the influential role of Birgili's *Ṭarīqa* on subsequent activism: R. Peters,'The Battered Dervishes of Bab Zuwayla'*,* esp. pp. 94, 102-103; Leïla Cherif-Chebbi, 'L'Yihewani, Une Machine De Guerre Contre Le Soufisme En Chine?', in *Islamic Mysticism Contested,* pp. 576-602, esp. p. 579.

[345] On this text, see M. Gaborieau, 'A Nineteenth-Century Indian "Wahhabi" Tract against the Cult of Muslim Saints: *Al-Balagh al-Mubin,*' in *Muslim Shrines in India,* edited by C.W. Troll (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2nd Edition 2004).

deviant Muslims; and it explains the correct way of seeking mediation (*wasīla*) of saints as opposed to the belief in intercession (*shafāᶜa*) practiced by the saint-worshippers.[346]

In his study of *al-Balāgh al-mubīn,* Gaborieau's main aim is to unveil its author. Along the way, he dismisses the popular view that the text was a work of Shāh Waliullāh al-Dehlawī, citing in support of his argument a series of internal and external evidences. Indeed his study argues persuasively that the text was composed either by Sayyid Aḥmad Barelwī or one of his disciples, and that it was written probably during the middle of the 19th century.[347] Gaborieau discovers that the text discloses two key attitudes: the first is an obvious preference of its author for the Naqshbandī order, and the second is a rather acute respect for the Ḥanbalī school, displayed by its frequent citations of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Ighāthat al-lahafān fī maṣāyid al-Shayṭān* as well as his teacher's *Iqtidā' al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*.[348] In connection with this, Gaborieau asks whether the apparent influence of the Ḥanbalīs over "Indian Wahhabis" such as Sayyid Aḥmad

[346] Gaborieau, 'Wahhabi Tract'. See also, A. Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 209. The preamble to the text should be compared to al-Āqḥiṣārī's preamble to the *Majālis* (see above, note 129); the similarities are striking:

> This treatise, called *al-Balāgh al-mubīn,* explains the verses of the Qur'an, the Traditions (*āḥādīth*) of the Prophet and the Traditions (*āthar*) of his Companions as well as the sayings (*akhbār*) of the great saints (*awliyā'-i ᶜazam*), in the hope that Allah may extend His mercy to the community of His Prophet and dispel the schism (*fitna*) which has spread among the Muslim masses because of their association with the Hindu polytheists (*mushrikūn-i hunūd*), confirming this verse of the Qur'an, 'Most of the People, although they believe in Allah, associate partners with Him' (Q.12: 106). This treatise has been written so that Allah 'may prove right was is right, and prove wrong what is wrong, even if the wrong-doers are displeased'; this is the promise of Allah. [...] This schism is the worship of tombs (*gor-parasti*). These tomb worshippers are also called 'saint-worshippers' (*pīr-parast*). These tomb worshippers consider their abominable cult as better than obligatory or commendable ritual acts (*ᶜibādāt*); they think that they can replace all obligatory rituals; reversely they do not think that any obligatory ritual can replace the worship of tombs. Cited in M. Gaborieau, p. 209.

[347] Gaborieau's central argument against *al-Balāgh al-mubīn* being the work of Shāh Waliullāh is that its radical teachings do not reflect his own rather more moderate positions on many of the practices it criticises, particularly the visitation of tombs. With its minimal Sufi dimension, it cannot either be a composition of the later *Ahl al-ḥadīth* movement, which expunged Sufism from its own religious outlook. See especially 'Wahhabi Tract', p. 230.

[348] See Gaborieau, 'Wahhabi Tract', p. 213, and p. 219 on the author's preference for the Naqshbandī order and p. 220 on his "Ḥanbalī-philia".

Barelwī and his disciples came directly through texts or through intermediaries. In this passage, he sets out his hypothesis:

> One cannot help being impressed by the fact that the most often reprinted Indian Wahhabi tracts, the *Nasihat al-Muslimin,* bears the same title as a work of Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Wahhab (d. 1792), the founder of the Wahhabi school in Arabia. The affiliation of Indian Wahhabis to the Hanbali school of thought was most probably through the Arabian Wahhabis: a textual comparison of the works of the two schools would certainly confirm this hypothesis. If it proves true, one has to assume that the teachings of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya reached India in the first decades of the nineteenth century from Arabia through pilgrims, that is to say at the same time that they reached Indonesia by the same channel.[349]

Gaborieau admits that his hypothesis is a reversion to an older position, shared by some colonial British writers and Orientalists who, in his own words, were known for "lumping together" Arabian and Indian reformists under the label Wahhabi,[350] rather than seeking local origins for the Indian reform movements of the 19th century. This was perhaps unavoidable since Gaborieau knew little at the time about al-Āqḥiṣārī and *Majālis al-abrār,* save only that they were cited frequently in *al-Balāgh al-mubīn* in connection with the *Iqtidā'* and *Ighātha.*

The close textual reading of *Majālis al-abrār* which forms the core of this study, and the findings which have been set out above, throw open the possibility of a third route through which Ḥanbalī ideas might have reached the Indian Subcontinent. The first two routes—autochthonous

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[349] Gaborieau, 'Wahhabi Tract', p. 232.

[350] Three examples of such are mentioned by Gaborieau: T.P. Hughes, *A Dictionary of Islam* (London: 1885; reprinted in Lahore, Premier Book House, 1964); W.W. Hunter, *The Indian Musulmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel against the Queen?* (London: Trubner & Co., 1871: reprinted Varanasi, Indological Book House, 1969), pp. 659-662; and Y.B. Mathur, *Muslims and Changing India* (Delhi: Trimurti Publications, 1972), pp. 72-102.

influences from antecedent Muslim Indian ideologies[351] and connections with Arabian reformers[352]—are not to be discounted. The new possibility is the route leading back to Ottoman Turkey in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It should be noted that this third trail also leads to much more relevant Ḥanafī, Māturīdī and Naqshbandī terrain. At the same time, the Ottoman link does not mean we are required to negate the possibility of Arabian Wahhābī influence since, as Gaborieau notes, the mark of Ibn ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb on some of the literature connected with the Indian reform movement is too striking to dismiss.[353] To say more at this stage would be premature. It is clear, however, that a revisit of *al-Balāgh al-mubīn* is needed, with a focus, *inter alia*, on investigating whether the citations of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim throughout the text are via *Majālis al-abrār* or directly from source.

A second more direct route through which *Majālis al-abrār* informed the Indian reformist milieu of the 19th century was via two Urdu translations that were completed in the latter part of the century by scholars connected with the Deoband seminary.[354] An Urdu edition, which was probably based on the first Indian lithographs, *Nafā'is al-azhār,* of Muftī Kifāyatullāh al-Dehlawī

[351] The key influences here would be of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī, Shāh Waliullāh al-Dehlawī and Shāh ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz, Waliullāh's son. For example, in his study of 18th century Indian revivalism, Rizvi relays a list of un-Islamic customs compiled by Sirhindī, which he suggested were prevalent among Muslim women in India. See in particular p. 188.

[352] Here it should be noted that the possible connections of the 19th century Indian reformers with "Arabian Wahhābīs", are not limited to Ibn ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb; Gaborieau points out that Sayyid Aḥmad Barelwī and his party of *Mujāhidīn* contacted Muḥammad b. ᶜAlī al-Shawkānī (d. 1249/1834), the Yemenī reformer, in 1822 on their return from Mecca to perform the Ḥajj. This they did to obtain a book of Traditions (*ḥadīth*). There are later points of contact also, which Gaborieau correctly highlights warrant investigation. For example, one of the possible influences of al-Shawkānī was as the inspiration for Shāh Ismāᶜīl Shahīd's rejection of *taqlīd.* See M. Gaborieau, 'Criticizing the Sufis: The Debate in Early-Nineteenth-Century India,' in *Islamic Mysticism Contested,* pp. 465-466.

[353] Gaborieau points to the fact that the most frequently reprinted treatise of the Indian reform movement is the *Naṣīḥat al-muslimīn,* which shares the same title as a work by Ibn ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb. A textual comparison between these two works would demonstrate whether there is a substantive relation. See 'Indian Wahhabi Tract', p. 232.

[354] See note 15 for the full titles of these translations.

is still in circulation today in the bookstores of India and Pakistan.[355] It demonstrates the fact that the *Majālis* was not only circulating among radical reformist movements such as that of Sayyid Aḥmad Barelwī, but also within relatively moderate circles such as within Deoband. In any case, what both spheres of influence indicate is that al-Āqḥiṣārī's ideas were as alive in the context of 19th century India as they were in seventeenth century Turkey, and that he is indeed a scholar who behoves greater attention, especially of those interested in the pre-modern antecedents of contemporary Islamic revivalism and reform.

The question of how Ottoman religious texts travelled from Turkey to India is an interesting one. We have noted that Gaborieau for one assumed that reformist ideas probably reached India via pilgrims visiting Arabia for the Ḥajj. It is of course a possibility that Qāḍīzādeli literature too first arrived in Arabia via Turkish pilgrims, and then carried eastwards. But there are other, albeit less obvious, possibilities. One such route could have been via the Sufi orders, in particular the Naqshbandī network, which was an important vehicle for the transmission of knowledge, culture and even trade.[356] Already, some significant studies that were inspired in the 1970s by Voll have demonstrated the existence of networks built around Sufi orders which linked various revivalists active in the 18th and 19th centuries, who spanned from India to the Arabian Peninsula. Such discoveries suggest how Qāḍīzādeli texts might have travelled to as far away as India and

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[355] M.M. Kifāyatullāh al-Dehlawī's translation of *Majālis al-abrār* (Dār al-Ishāᶜat: Karachi, 1398/1978). Given the association of Muftī Kifāyatullāh with the Urdu translation, the *Majālis* continues to be influential among Deobandis even today. A renowned scholar of Deoband, Kifāyatullāh was *muftī* and teacher of *ḥadīth* at the Madrasah-yi Aminiyyah in Delhi, founded at the end of the 19th century. See B. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

[356] An interesting and relevant study on the interconnectedness of the Ottoman, Safavid and Moghul Empires, highlighting the role of spiritual networks in disseminating ideas and texts between them, is F. Robinson's 'Ottomans-Safavids-Mughals', esp. pp. 164-171.

Indonesia. Voll has described the participation of the Mizjaji family in Yemen within an informal network of scholars, many of whom were involved in revivalist activity during the 18th century. By noting the links via this family, Voll demonstrated the ties among groups which might otherwise appear unrelated.[357] Important scholars who were involved in this particular network included Ibrāhīm al-Kurānī of Medina (d. 1101/1689); his son, Muḥammad Ṭāhir (d. 1145/1732); Muḥammad Ḥayāt al-Sindī (d. 1163/1749), the teacher of Muḥammad b. cAbd al-Wahhāb; Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī; and members of the Aḥḍal family, who had connections with the 19th century revivalist, Aḥmad b. Idrīs (d. 1253/1837). Voll is emphatic that participation in a revivalist network did not imply the existence of homogeneity in terms of content of teaching.[358] Nevertheless, he asserts that there was a 'relatively common mood or tone within the network,' in so far as those connected had 'a general dissatisfaction with conditions as they were and a sense of hope for improvement'; moreover, this hope for improvement was 'oriented toward human activities rather than expectations of eschatological intervention'.[359] In the scholarly core of the network, Voll notes that many of the linking figures can commonly be identified as scholars of *ḥadīth* and as affiliated with a brotherhood organisation—the one order which appears as most common among the revivalists was that of the Naqshbandī order.[360] But

[357] Voll, 'Linking Groups in the Networks of Eighteenth-Century Revivalist Scholars: The Mizjaji Family in Yemen,' in *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam,* edited by N. Levtzion and J.O. Voll (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), p. 75.

[358] For example, Voll points out that, 'Some, like Wali allah and Ibrahim al-Kurani seem to have been aiming at synthesis and trying to avoid extremes while others, like Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, clearly stressed exclusiveness and absolute answers. Some were militant while others were politically quietist. Some stressed *hadith* in their studies while others were more concerned with Sufism or *fiqh* or philology'. See 'Linking Groups', p. 80.

[359] Voll, 'Linking Groups', p. 81.

[360] Voll, 'Linking Groups', p. 81.

the content of their mysticism was a variation of the Naqshbandī path rather than the more familiar branches of the Order as set out in its *silsila*. On this, Voll says:

> During the eighteenth century the revivalist mood frequently found among the Naqshbandis seems to have been developed even further. It seems to have combined, in some cases, with North African approaches to mass *tariqahs* to produce the neo-Sufi-type order.[361]

The obvious question is whether the Naqshbandī order, or a variation of it, was what also linked the Ottoman reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—people like al-Āqḥiṣārī—to the 18th century revivalists in Arabia and elsewhere? The likelihood certainly exists, especially as we know from studies such as R. Peters' on the Dervishes of Bab Zuwayla that Birgili's *al-Ṭarīqat al-Muḥammadiyya* and other puritanical texts were inspiring anti-dervish violence in Cairo during the 18th century.[362]

There is every possibility that a closer examination of a wider range of Qāḍīzādeli inspired texts, and generally a more nuanced approach to early modern Ottoman revivalism and reform, will shed more light on the Neo-Sufism debate. There are clearly dimensions of al-Āqḥiṣārī's thought that overlap with later revivalist phenomena; the Indian reform movement was almost certainly attracted to *Majālis al-abrār* because of these. The content of the reformist message of Sayyid Aḥmad Barelwī is strikingly similar to al-Āqḥiṣārī's own reformist outlook: both men were critics of Sufi deviancy whilst remaining advocates of a broad Sufi agenda.[363] Birgili's influence

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[361] Voll, 'Linking Groups', pp. 84-85.

[362] See above, note 326.

[363] On Sayyid Aḥmad's "minimal Sufi dimension" see Gaborioeau, 'A Wahhabi Tract', p. 207.

cannot be discounted, both in terms of his writings and also his revivalist vision. Many of the convergences have been known to scholars for some time. Yet there has been a delay it seems in affording them the attention they deserve. It is possible that what has impeded scholars from looking more closely at sixteenth and seventeenth century Ottoman revivalism and its connection to later reformist movements is the overwhelming inclination of scholars studying the Qāḍīzādelis to view them as opponents of Sufism. If indeed this has been an impediment, by virtue of the findings presented in this study, renewed interest in the movement may well be prompted.

Conclusion

The assertion that contemporary Islamist violence is the birth-child of Wahhābism is a familiar one; based on this chapter, those who are interested in searching for origins should perhaps begin their search at least a century earlier, looking beyond the geographical boundaries of the Arabian Peninsula towards the Ottoman west. Indeed a striking parallel is to be found between contemporary Islamist violence and the sort of violence that was meted out by Ottoman puritans engaged in religious activism during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The stories of Qāḍīzādeli violence are well-known to scholars of the movement. Among the wounded were the battered dervishes of Bāb Zuwayla, in Cairo, who were attacked by swords and cudgels for merely holding a *dhikr* session. Their attackers were a group of Ottoman Turk students inspired by Qāḍīzādeli notions of forbidding evil, and for whom official sanction was not a

prerequisite.[364] We may also note the violence of the Qāḍīzādelis of the seventeenth century, which included their attacks on Khalwatī tekkes, notably the tekke in Demür Qapu. Nāᶜīmā reports about this incident that the perpetrators not only destroyed the building, they also physically attacked those who were in the tekke. The attack was instigated by a performance involving audible *dhikr* and the *dawarān*.[365]

And whilst we consider the source of Qāḍīzādeli violence, we should pay special attention to al-Āqḥiṣārī. Though a careful study of other Qāḍīzādeli literature is needed to say anything definitive about the views of its key formulators on the principle of enjoining good and forbidding evil, it is very unlikely that anything will come close to al-Āqḥiṣārī's hard-line approach. He was brazen about encouraging violence as a *modus operandi* for forbidding evil, particularly in the absence of other options, and he certainly takes no issue with who should or should not be undertaking the duty. His statement on tobacco-smoking imams and muezzins is an example of this; so too is his recommendation that arrogant preachers be removed from the pulpit. He also makes direct reference to ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb's destruction of the famous tree at which the Prophet received the oath of allegiance from the two Medinian tribes, al-Aws and al-Khazraj—suggesting that Muslims do the same whenever over-reverence of this kind occurs.

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[364] For a full account of this event, see R. Peters, 'The Battered Dervishes of Bab Zuwayla: A Religious Riot in Eighteenth-Century Cairo', in *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam,* edited by N. Letzvion and J.O. Voll (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987). In the account, the chronicler mentions that just a day earlier, these students had been studying Birgili's *al-Ṭarīqat al-Muḥammadiyya.*

[365] See Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy', p. 238. At times, such attacks would be preceded by letters of threat sent to the tekke. Öztürk translated the following letter which was signed by Üṣṭüwānī and sent to the shaykh ᶜAbd al-Karīm Çelebi (d. 1106/1694): 'It has become an obligation to stop you. Since you have been performing *raqṣ* and *dawarān*, we will raid your tekke, murder you and your followers, dig up the foundations of your tekke to the depth of a few arshin and pour its earth into the sea. So long as this degree of care is not shown, it will not be lawful to perform the ·alat in that place.' Ibid, p. 240

Seeking to further emphasise the duty to enjoin good and forbid evil, he issues a stern warning to anyone who witnesses evil and does nothing to prevent it: 'The duty upon whoever hears the like of false utterances is to rebuke (*inkār*) the speaker whilst being absolutely certain about the falsity of his speech, without dither or hesitation. If he does not, then he is from among them and shall be judged [himself] a heretic (*yuḥkam bi-l-zandaqa*)'.[366]

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[366] *Majlis I,* f. 5v.

CONCLUSION

Until Yahya Michot's translation of *Dukhāniyyeh—Against Smoking: An Ottoman Manifesto*— the most we could say about Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī was contained in a short sentence of Ismāᶜīl Pāsha: 'Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Āqḥiṣārī al-Rūmī al-Ḥanafī was a shaykh of the Khalwatīs (*min mashāyikh al-Khalwatiyya*)'.[367] But the *Dukhāniyye* could only tell us so much about this intriguing Ottoman puritan, leaving huge scope for further study. Therefore, when Michot, in his capacity as supervisor, provided the present author with the only complete extant copy of al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Majālis al-abrār* there was a sense in which centuries of neglect of both the man and the text might finally be remedied. And while it will always remain a mystery as to why such an important historical figure and text have been ignored for so long, speculation is at the same time irresistible: could it be perhaps from discomfiture with this whole period of Ottoman religious history, beginning in roughly the middle of the sixteenth century and ending in the late seventeenth, particularly among Turkish scholars? Or perhaps the fact that *Majālis al-abrār* is obsessed with *bidᶜa* and therefore cries out to be classed as yet another ultra-traditionalist work of polemic? Ot perhaps it would upset the status quo relating to our understanding of modern Islamic extremism, which for political expediency is best attributd to Wahhābism. Whatever the underlying factors may be, by virtue of the present study, we are now able to see the true value of the man and the text, and having placed al-Āqḥiṣārī firmly within his own Ḥanafī, Māturīdī and Sufī milieu, we are more aware than ever about how wrong Ismāᶜīl Pāsha was when he listed him as "shaykh of the Khalwatīs".

[367] I. Pāsha, *Hadiyyat al-ᶜārifīn*, 6: 142.

The degree of alignment between al-Āqḥiṣārī's conceptualisation of Sufism and the Naqshbandī path is perhaps the most striking finding of this study. It was initially determined from a reading of al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Risāla fī l-sulūk*. Had it not been for the discovery of this small epistle, it is doubtful that the linkage would have been made at all since, despite the scope of *Majālis al-abrār,* it is more concerned with highlighting religious deviancy than with presenting a clear outline of what its author's vision of authentic spirituality was. It should not be inferred from this that the *Majālis* has nothing to say about spirituality for it indeed betrays much about al-Āqḥiṣārī's interest in spiritual wayfaring.

That a Qāḍīzādeli text should have been informed to this extent by Naqshbandī Sufism would have been all the more remarkable had it not been for the tentative conclusions of previous scholarly work. The first to suggest a Qāḍīzādeli-Naqshbandī connection was Le Gall, whose research on the pre-Mujaddidī Naqshbandīs of the Ottoman Empire presented the case of Osman Bosnevī, a Naqshbandī shaykh who was also a close companion of the later leader of the Qāḍīzādelis, Meḥmed Uṣṭuwānī. Le Gall noted the role of the shaykh in the Qāḍīzādeli affair, which she inferred from Nāᶜīmā's *Tārīḥ*, in which Bosnevī is described as 'teacher of the pages in the Palace [and] preacher of the Süleymāniye [Mosque]'.[368] Since the *nisba* 'Bosnevī' was not mentioned in Nāᶜīmā's history, Le Gall furnished further proof for his identification on the basis of another account, documented by Usakīzāde in the *Zeyl-i shaqā'iq.*[369] This same link was also

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[368] Cited in Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism,* p. 152.

[369] Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism*, p. 152.

tentatively suggested by Weismann, who, in a monograph on the Naqshbandī order, remarked on the possibility that Naqshbandi influence upon the formation of modern Islamic trends might precede the 18th century, and be traceable to the second half of the sixteenth century in Ottoman Turkey. He spoke about the 'project of Birgili' as an early expression of this tendency, especially his idea of the Muḥammadan Way.[370] Weismann noted Birgili's close connections with the Amir-i Bukhari lodge, the principal Naqshbandī institution in Istanbul at the time, as well as Birgili's admission into the ranks of the scholarly estate by virtue of the patronage of the brother-in-law and disciple of a certain Shaykh Abdüllatif. We are told that later Birgili was installed in the College of Birgi through the patronage of Sultan Selim II's tutor and disciple of Shaykh Sha'ban.[371] According to Weismann, Birgili's association with the Naqshbandīs went beyond this: 'Despite his censure of the Sufi brotherhoods, Mehmed Birgevi's teachings were taken up by several Naqshbandis of Istanbul who supported his emphatic orthodox outlook. Most prominent were Mehmed Ma'ruf Trabzuni (d. 1594), translator of Kashifi's *Rashahat 'ayn al-hayah* into Turkish, and Ahmed Tirevi (d. after 1620), head of the Hekim Çelebi lodge.'[372] Although both Le Gall and Weismann described points of contact between the Qāḍīzādelis and the Naqshbandīs, neither was able to furnish any textual evidence to support their assertions. It is for this reason that the following criticism was directed at Le Gall in particular:

> Entirely unconvincing is Le Gall's attempt to link the Naqshbandis, in the person of Şeyh Osman Bosnevī, with the Kadızadeli movement, a major protagonist in the 'battles over orthodoxy'. As she affirms, the historian Naᶜimā does indeed mention a

[370] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya,* p. 134.

[371] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya,* p. 134.

[372] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, p. 134.

> certain Şeyh Osman, a preacher at the Süleymaniye mosque, as an associate of the Kadızadeli leader, Mehmed Üstüvānī, but without qualifying him as Bosnevī. 'Şeyh Osman' was not exactly a rare name at any point in Ottoman history, and the detail that like the Şeyh Osman mentioned by Na^cimā the Bosnian bearer of this name preached in a number of Istanbul mosques hardly suffices to prove their identity. Similarly, the fact that Bosnevi's preceptor, Ahmed Tirevi, may have been close to Mehmed Birgili, a scholar invoked by the Kadızadeli movement as its intellectual source, is a flimsy foundation for the thesis Le Gall expounds in four and a half pages of pure speculation.[373]

The challenge is of course unfounded. Moreover, by virtue of this study there are many more reasons to support a linkage between the Naqshbandī order and the Qāḍīzādelis, and a much clearer understanding as to why Naqshbandīs such as Tirevī would have been attracted to the puritanical agenda of Qāḍīzādelis such as al-Āqḥiṣārī. For example, it has been noted that the notion of spirituality and the spiritual path as it was formulated by al-Āqḥiṣārī converges with Naqshbandī Sufism in several aspects. Indeed, if consideration is given to the way in which the Naqshbandī order presented itself, both positively and negatively, the parallels between al-Āqḥiṣārī's approach to the spiritual path and the order become more striking.[374] In terms of negative differentiation, al-Āqḥiṣārī clearly sought to set apart his own vision of the spiritual path from the *Aṣḥāb al-khalwa*, a people whom he considered were in open contravention of the Sharī^ca. He opposed mystical dancing, audible *dhikr* and the claim that mystical visions had any independent epistemic value. He is somewhat ambivalent about ascetic practices (*mujāhadāt*), in

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[373] H. Algar, review of Le Gall's *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandis in the Ottoman World, 1450-1700*, *Journal of Islamic Studies,* 18 (2007), pp. 414-420. (pp. 419-420).

[374] Le Gall explains the negative and positive ways in which the Naqshbandīs set themselves apart from other Sufi orders. In terms of positive differentiation, they placed focus on the silent *dhikr* together with a specific manner of enunciating the *dhikr* formula *lā ilāha illallāh* in the heart; the *rābiṭa* was given a special place in the devotional regimen of the Naqshbandīs, some considering it as the superior of all spiritual techniques. In terms of negative differentiation, the Naqshbandīs defined themselves in opposition to other Sufis and their common devotional practices, which they cast as unduly emotive, inferior, ostentatious or incompatible with strict observance of the Sharī^ca. Long periods of fasting, mystical music and dancing and the *khalwa* all fell under this rubric. See 'Forgotten Naqshbandīs', pp. 94-96.

part because of his suspicion towards the miracles, mystical visions and inspirations (*kashf*) associated with them, but also because of the extreme demands they place on a disciple. The Naqshbandīs were also ‘known for their own attitude of ambivalence towards *mujāhadāt*’, as noted by Le Gall.[375] As for positively differentiating his approach, al-Āqḥiṣārī claimed that the formula *lā ilāha illallāh* was the most elevated of the formulae used in *dhikr*, insisting at the same time that it be should only ever be used silently; he saw a place on the spiritual path for the *rābiṭa*, and maintained that a disciple should offer complete obedience to his shaykh; even the activism of al-Āqḥiṣārī—and his insistence on *al-amr bi-l-ma*ᶜ*rūf wa l-nahy* ᶜ*an al-munkar*—can be provided as an example for its echoing of the Naqshbandī practice of “activity-in-this-world” (*khalvet dār anjumān*).

Yet for all these interesting convergences, neither *Majālis al-abrār* nor *Risāla fī-l-sulūk* are to be read as handbooks of Naqshbandī Sufism. This is since al-Āqḥiṣārī is silent about the Naqshbandī order, its associated literature and its personalities. Indeed at times the al-Āqḥiṣārī is ambivalent about the precise nature of the method he envisions. On the one hand, he insists that every wayfarer (*sālik*) should have a shaykh, linked in a line of shaykhs back to the Prophet; on the other, he does not state anywhere that a disciple should commit to a spiritual order. What was al-Āqḥiṣārī proposing, then, with his construction of the spiritual path? From a reading of *Majālis al-abrār,* other shorter epistles of al-Āqḥiṣārī, it is clear that he wants to see spirituality, and religious practice generally, anchored in the *Sunna* of the Prophet, which for him means being based strictly in the *ḥadīth* tradition. What has been said about activist Sufi movements in

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[375] Le Gall, ‘Forgotten Naqshbandīs’, p. 96.

other contexts seems very relevant here: al-Āqḥiṣārī sought to position the personality of the Prophet at the fore of his schema in order to effectively create a model of authority in which sainthood and religious leadership would be predicated on the imitation of the Prophetic archetype. Not to be confused with the Muḥammadan paradigm of Hākim al-Tirmidhī and those of his school, whose system, it has been suggested, entailed a substitution of a God-centred mysticism with a prophet-centred one,[376] in the schema of al-Āqḥiṣārī, attention on the Prophet clearly means an emphasis upon the Sharīᶜa before anything else. Ultimately, al-Āqḥiṣārī was seeking a rapprochement between the Sharīᶜa and *ḥaqīqa*, which he thought could be achieved through close study of the religious observances of the Prophet as recorded in the sound traditions (*ṣiḥāḥ*). This helps to understand why he chose to couch the *Majālis* as a commentary on the *Maṣābīḥ al-Sunna*. Only from the Prophetic tradition could there follow an authentic model of *Imitatio Muḥammadi* and spiritual practices which could not be justified by the texts of the Qur'an and *ḥadīth* were to be condemned as innovations. No existing Sufi order could provide this, not even the Naqshbandiyya, and so al-Āqḥiṣārī is here a visionary.

In pursuit of his vision, al-Āqḥiṣārī drew from the works of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim, an approach typical of other Qāḍīzādeli ideologues but nevertheless unconventional in an intellectual milieu infused with Ḥanafī and Māturīdī thought. Why al-Āqḥiṣārī and his fellow-revivalists should have had recourse to these early reformers is not difficult to discern: they had already done much of the work of critiquing the "errors" of heterodox Sufis from both theological and juristic angles. They were also ostensible supporters of a Sufism anchored in the

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[376] On this see S.H. Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1972).

Sharīᶜa, which resonated with the Ottoman puritans and provided the inspiration needed for their own recasting of the spiritual path.

While it is significant that al-Āqḥiṣārī and his fellow Qāḍīzādelis drew inspiration from Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim, it is important to consider the limits of this influence. Whereas al-Āqḥiṣārī clearly shared with Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim their outlook on innovation and their opposition to various heterodox religious practices, it is clear that on dogmatic questions al-Āqḥiṣārī and the Qāḍīzādelis could not have been any further from them on the ideological spectrum. As a case in point, we may cite the very distinct attitude of the Qāḍīzādelis towards dialectical theology (*kalām*). Al-Āqḥiṣārī was a staunch advocate of Māturīdī theology and he went to considerable lengths to defend the *kalām* tradition. This is in stark contrast to both Ibn Taymiyya and his erstwhile student, neither of whom concealed their contempt for *kalām*-theology. For the Ashᶜarīs and Māturīdīs, *kalām* was seen as synonymous with the principles of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*); for Ibn Taymiyya, the philosophical proofs of the *mutakallimūn* were redundant in the face of the Qur'an and *Sunna,* both of which provide superior and sufficient proofs for the key points of belief. He says,

> These [principles] which [the *mutakallimūn*] call the principles of religion are in reality not part of the principles of religion that God prescribed for his servants [...] When it is understood that what is called 'principles of religion' in the usage of those who employ this term consists of indeterminacy and ambiguity caused by equivocal coinage and technical terms (*li mā fī-hā min al-ishtirāk bi-ḥasab al-awḍāᶜ wa l-*

> *istilāḥāt*), it becomes evident that the principles of religion accepted by God, His Messenger, and His believers, are that which was transmitted from the Prophet.[377]

Ibn Taymiyya says elsewhere, and with all severity, that the so-called principles of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*) as spoken of in the works of the *mutakallimūn* are more aptly called the "principles of Satanic religion".[378] While he does not call either the Ashᶜarīs or the Māturīdīs outright heretics simply for their advocacy of *kalām*-theology—indeed, he allows belief to be predicated on *kalām* arguments for those whose natural dispositions (*fiṭra*) have become corrupted and therefore have no alternative but to base their belief in God on philosophical arguments[379]—one doubts whether al-Āqḥiṣārī would have found Ibn Taymiyya's latitude in any way compensatory. It remains intriguing that notwithstanding these significant differences in doctrine al-Āqḥiṣārī and his Qāḍīzādeli comrades were not in any way deterred from invoking the views of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim on other matters of religion.

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[377] Translation in M.S. Özervali, 'The Qur'ānic Rational Theology of Ibn Taymiyya and his Criticism of the *mutakallimūn,*' in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,* edited by Y. Rapoport and S Ahmed (Karachi and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 82. It is worth noting that Ibn Taymiyya's theology had at its core a call to return to the way of the first generation of Muslims and a rejection of foreign, particularly Neoplatonic, influences in the Muslim conception of God. According to him, excessive intellectualism serves only to weaken the faith of the ordinary believer, and leads ultimately to schisms amongst the ᶜulamā'. Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*) must always maintain its simplicity, and it should appeal to the masses as well as to the elite. For Ibn Taymiyya, this was the way of stability; the *kalām* theologians, on the other hand, were responsible for the corruption of the creed, never firm on a position for long and always adapting doctrines to suit their views. He says, 'You will find that the adherents of *kalām* are the foremost among people in shifting from one position to another, certain of a position at one place and then certain of its contrary, [all the while], accusing opponents of disbelief! This is evidence for [their] lack of certainty. Translation in M. Sheikh, 'Ibn Taymiyya on the Attributes of God', unpublished MSt thesis, University of Oxford, 2007, pp. 18-19. On Ibn Taymiyya's theology, see H. Laoust, *Essai led doctrines socials et politiques de Taki-d-Din Ahmad b. Taimiya, canoniste hanbalite* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut d'Archeologie Orientale, 1939).

[378] Cited in Özervali, 'Qur'ānic Rational Theology', p. 82.

[379] For more on this, see W. Hallaq, 'Ibn Taymiyya on the Existence of God,' *Acta Orientalia*, 52 (1991), pp. 49-69.

This study has also highlighted the significance of al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Majālis al-abrār* for the Qāḍīzādeli reform agenda. The magnitude of his scholarly output indicates that he was as important for the movement as Birgili and Qāḍīzāde. Mention has already been made of the manuscripts in which his *Risāleh* was bound together with the epistles of Birgili and Qāḍīzāde. Furthermore, the textual study has demonstrated both al-Āqḥiṣārī's competency as a scholar and the broad scope of his interests. That he composed a series of works covering the gamut of religious sciences taught in his time are indicative of this. He would have been viewed with immense respect within the ᶜIlmiyye and must surely have spoken with authority. His support would have afforded the Qāḍīzādelis far greater credibility than Qāḍīzāde—he would perhaps have been on par with Birgili. Apart from his *Vassiyetname* (*Risāleh*), which was composed in the vernacular, he always wrote in classical Arabic, the lingua franca of the Muslim world, making his work accessible to a much wider audience. This would have facilitated the dissemination of the Qādīzadeli vision far and wide. It is quite possible that al-Āqḥiṣārī was also pivotal for the movement's trajectory in its second phase. The increasingly violent Qāḍīzādeli activists of the second half of the seventeenth century were possibly spurred on by al-Āqḥiṣārī's ardent advocacy of *ḥisba*. Earlier formulations of Qāḍīzādeli Islam, traceable back to Birgili, inclined towards leaving physical intervention to the authorities. By the time of the second phase of Qāḍīzādeli activism, under the leadership of Üṣṭüwānī, a very different tenor characterised the campaign of the Qāḍīzādelis: they were far more brazen in their approach, taking the fight against un-Islamic behaviour into their own hands, mostly without the express sanction of the authorities. This change in attitude has to be accounted for, yet the obvious candidate, Meḥmet Qāḍīzāde, does not appear to be the source of it, since he was clearly working within the ambit of

what was officially sanctioned. His proximity to Murād IV indicates this but also, as is clear from his *Risāleh,* there is no mention of the principle of enjoining good and forbidding evil. Birgili's candidacy is also doubtful. In al-Āqḥiṣārī's case, we have a scholar who had no compunction about the common man taking matters into his own hands. At one place in the *Majālis*, he insists that the congregation physically removes an imām who is found reeking of tobacco or any other such "abominable odour", even if this means dragging him out by his hands and feet.[380] In another instance, any preacher (*wāᶜiẓ*) whose sermon is not in conformity with the Qur'an and *Sunna* should be physically removed from the pulpit in accordance with the dictates of enjoining good and forbidding evil. At no point does al-Āqḥiṣārī restrict this task to the authorities. With scholars of al-Āqḥiṣārī's standing taking such hard-line positions, it is little wonder that the Qāḍīzādelis would soon begin entering mosques, tekkes and coffee-houses in order to mete out punishments to those contravening their version of orthodoxy. It is also little wonder that Ottoman Turks would soon demand that the authorities take action to prevent these unsanctioned acts of violence.

Findings of this study open up new possibilities for understanding the religious terrain of Ottoman Turkey during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thus far, research on the Qāḍīzādelis has placed little to no emphasis on contextualising the ideational content of the movement's programme for reform; instead, the movement has been viewed through post-eighteenth century paradigms, usually Salafī, with little consideration paid to the differences which exist between modern forms of revivalism and the puritanism of the Qāḍīzādelis.

[380] Michot*, Against Smoking,* pp. 53-54.

Furthermore, although recent research on the Naqshbandīs of Ottoman Turkey, such as the studies of Le Gall and Weismann, has brought attention to points of contact between some Qāḍīzādelis and the Naqshbandī order, there has not been any substantive work undertaken before this study seeking to understand the basis for the association. Clearly the study of intellectual history and phenomena which are related to it demands close examination of texts wherever they are available. When this endeavour is undertaken—and wherever possible informed by biographical sources and chronicles—a more accurate reconstruction of the past is achievable.

There is still much work to be done on both the Qāḍīzādelis and on Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī. The Qāḍīzādeli corpus of texts is indeed extensive so further explorations of the kind undertaken for this study remain possible and important; they will serve to falsify the conclusions arrived at here but also allow a sharpening of focus around the relationship between Sufism and activism that reveals itself in Qāḍīzādeli Puritanism and which herald the beginning of a new mystical paradigm in Muslim religious history. If indeed it can be demonstrated that there existed a similar model of Sufism in other reformist literature of the time, we would then be entertaining the possibility that al-Āqḥiṣārī, the Qāḍīzādelis, and those Naqshbandīs of Istanbul who had bought into the ideals of the Muḥammadan Way—Meḥmed Ma^c^rūf Trabzūnī (d. 1594), translator of Kāshifī's *Rashahāt ^c^ayn al-ḥayā* into Turkish, and Aḥmad Tirevī, head of the Ḥekīm Çelebi lodge being among these[381]— constituted a network of revivalists far greater in significance than anything yet known in the Ottoman seventeenth century. The influence in posterity of al-

[381] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya,* p. 134.

Āqḥiṣārī’s *Majālis al-abrār,* Birgili’s *al-Ṭarīqat al-Muḥammadiyya* and other Qāḍīzādeli texts upon Subcontinent, Arabian and Southeast Asian revivalist movements also behove further investigation, and, without doubt, the influence of the Qāḍīzādeli corpus on the ideas and writings of Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb will be an important aspect of this. At present, studies on eighteenth and nineteenth century revivalism have a tendency to emphasise the connections and networks linking Arabia with India, without demonstrating the same level of interest in possible Ottoman involvement in these networks. It is high time this changed and it is hoped that this study has provided a few good reasons why such investigations are now all the more urgent. By virtue of this study, it is clearer than ever that a consideration of al-Aqḥiṣārī and the Qadizadelis is necessary not simply through the prism of early modern Ottoman Islam, but within a wider global web of developments in Islamic thought and intellectual history in this vibrant and important period of Muslim history.

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